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## **The Right and Wrong of Private Judgment**

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In his recent book *Luther and His Work* the Catholic writer Joseph Clayton says: "To this day Martin Luther is praised . . . for bringing the gift of private judgment in faith and morals to all believers. On the other hand, among Catholics Luther is held in abhorrence as an apostate monk who drew countless souls into heresy and whole nations into schism; the evil of whose life has lived after him." According to Luther "No one, neither pope nor bishop, has any right to dictate to the individual Christian what he shall or shall not believe. . . . The notion that the Pope has the right to interpret the Sacred Scriptures must be destroyed, since to all baptized believers is given the priesthood." "When Luther burned the whole collection of papal decrees known as the body of canon law and the bull of excommunication on Dec. 10, 1520 . . . a new theology was inaugurated, placing man's private judgment in the seat of authority and promising assurance of personal salvation." "Feeling usurped the place of thought, private judgment came to be raised above all decisions of pope and council, so that quite suddenly, as in a night while men slept, new creeds and new beliefs cropped up." "The path from Catholicism to private judgment in religion . . . led on to skepticism and thence to the ultimate atheism so widespread and active in our day" (pp. XV, XXIII, 75, 79, 84, 103).

Did Luther stand for the right of private judgment? All the world knows that he did. Clayton and the Pope and the liberal Protestants and we are agreed on that. But there is great disagreement as to what the right of private judgment involves. And in view of the fact that many Protestant groups make a false application of the glorious principle Luther re-established and in view of the further fact that many of us do not realize the sacred duty which

this principle imposes, a discussion of it would seem to be as timely now as in the days of Luther.

Let us study these two propositions: I. There is an exercise of private judgment which God sanctions and demands. II. There is an exercise of private judgment which God absolutely forbids and condemns.

## I

When the Christian decides questions of faith and morals for himself, refusing to accept blindly what some other man tells him, and when he, in judging doctrine on the basis of Scripture, refuses to accept blindly what some other man tells him as to the meaning of Scripture, but searches Scripture for himself, he is exercising a right which God has given him and which he is required, for the salvation of his soul, to exercise. What this right involves will be presented in the present article under five heads. The following article will treat of its supreme importance.

1. "*The right to judge, and pronounce on, matters of doctrine* belongs to each and every Christian, so much so that he is doing an accursed thing who impairs this right by a hair's breadth" (Luther, XIX:241—344; concerning "*The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*"). God says that. He said to the Christians: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21); no man may do the testing for you. God approved of the instructions which Paul gave: "Judge ye what I say" (1 Cor. 10:15). When the Apostle said: "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1), God impressed upon the Christians the need to examine carefully and thoroughly every religious teaching that comes to them. When Christ tells them to "beware of false prophets" (Matt. 7:15), He authorizes them to sit in judgment on the teachers of religion.

In the realm of the Pope this sacred right of private judgment has been abolished. The papist charter declares: "One is your master, I, the Pope at Rome; all ye are my subjects; it is for me to say what you are to believe." He does not use exactly these words; but these words express his meaning exactly. Luther's teaching that "no one, neither pope nor bishop, has any right to dictate to the individual Christian what he shall or shall not believe" is set down by J. Clayton as a treasonable proclamation. The good Catholic says: Does not the bull *Unam Sanctam* (Nov. 18, 1302) ascribe universal dominion to Boniface VIII and his successors? "We declare, determine, and decree that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pontiff. . . . He judges all things, but himself is judged by no one." He is not only the absolute ruler of the State, but also the dictator

in religion. The Christians must regulate their belief according to his decisions. They dare not form their own judgments in religious matters, and they dare not question the teaching of the pope. The pope is judged by no one.<sup>1)</sup> The common Christians, laymen and clergy, are not competent to judge matters of faith. They have not sufficient Christian intelligence to do that, declared Innocent IV in his commentary on the canon law. "He has openly told us what amount of Christian culture and knowledge, both for clergy and laity, suits the papal system. It is enough, he says, for the laity to know that there is a God who rewards the good and, for the rest, to believe implicitly what the Church believes. Bishops and pastors must distinctly know the articles of the Apostle's Creed; the other clergy need not know more than the laity and also that the body of Christ is made in the Sacrament of the Altar.—*Comment. in Deqr. 2*" (Janus, *op. cit.*, p. 131. Fick, *Das Geheimniss der Bosheit*, p. 177). Let not one of these form his own judgment on questions of faith, on questions of morals. Why, there is a provision in the papal law which says in effect: "Even if a pope is so bad that he drags down whole nations to hell with him in troops, nobody can rebuke him; for he who judges all can be judged of no man; the only exception is in case of his swerving from the faith" (of no longer professing the Christian faith).<sup>2)</sup>

Let him who judges all be judged by no man! His decrees and definitions of faith must not be called in question by any man, any Christian, any priest, any bishop, any cardinal. In the realm of Antichrist the right of private judgment does not exist.

"To this day," says Clayton, "Martin Luther is praised for bringing the gift of private judgment in faith and morals to all believers." Indeed, we thank God that He raised up Luther to proclaim to the Church: "The right to judge matters of doctrine belongs to each and every Christian. . . . Christ established this

1) See Hurst, *History of the Christian Church*, I, p. 774; Janus (Ignatius v. Doellinger), *The Pope and the Council*, p. 131, on "the universality of papal dominion" claimed in this bull; Th. Graebner, *The Dark Ages*, p. 110: "Boniface maintained that all kings and persons whatsoever, by divine command, owed perfect obedience to the Roman pontiff in all religious matters, and, as well, in all secular affairs."

2) The provision of the *Decretum Gratiani*, *Dist. 40, ch. 6*, is quoted in this form by Janus, who adds: "Cardinal Deusdedit published it under the venerated name of St. Boniface, the apostle of Germany." *Op. cit.*, p. 92. See Fick, *op. cit.*, p. 99. Luther quotes it in his *Open Letter to the Christian Nobility*: "It must therefore have been the very prince of devils who said what is written in the canon law: 'If the Pope were so scandalously bad as to lead souls in crowds to the devil, yet he could not be deposed.' On this accursed and devilish foundation they build at Rome. . . ." See Luther X.275, where a footnote gives the whole text of the decree.—Luther did well when he consigned the canon law containing this decree and many others of equal antichristian wickedness to the flames.

right, as many passages uncontestedly show. There is, for instance, Matt. 7:15: 'Beware of false prophets.' This warning is addressed to the people, warning them against the teachers and commanding them to avoid their false teachings. But how can they avoid them if they do not know them? And how shall they know them if they have no right to judge doctrine? Yes, Christ gave to the people not only the right but also the command to judge. So this one passage suffices against the verdict of all popes, all fathers, all councils, all schools that ascribe the right to judge and determine only to the bishops and priests and have robbed the people, that is, the Church, the queen, of it in a most ungodly and sacrilegious manner. . . . When Christ says John 10:27, 5: 'My sheep hear My voice. A stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him,' does He not make the sheep judges, conferring the right to judge on the hearers? . . . 1 Thess. 5:21. . . . And again, 1 Cor. 2:15: 'He that is spiritual judgeth all things.' But every Christian is spiritual through the Spirit of Christ (1 Cor. 3:21, 22) 'All things are yours,' Paul says, 'whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas,' that means: You have the right to judge concerning all words and deeds. . . . No man can gainsay this: the right and power to judge and decide concerning doctrine lies with us, not with the councils, popes, fathers, teachers" (XIX:341—344).

Let us hear a few more similar statements and thank God for them. On Gal. 2:16: "While this doctrine, pacifying and quieting the conscience, remaineth pure and incorrupt, Christians are made judges over all kinds of doctrine and are lords over the laws of the whole world. Then can they certainly judge that the Turk with his Alcoran is damned, because he goeth not the right way. . . . In like manner they boldly pronounce sentence against the Pope, that he is condemned with all his kingdom . . ." (IX:184). And the treatise on "*The Right and Power of a Christian Congregation to Judge All Teaching*" declares: "The word and teaching of man have decreed and prescribed that the judging of doctrine be left altogether to bishops, theologians, and councils. Whatever these have decided all the world is bound to regard as law and as articles of faith. This is abundantly proved by their daily harping on the Pope's canon law. One hears scarcely anything else from them but the boast that they have the power and the right to judge what is Christian and what is heretical; the common Christian must wait their decision and abide by it. This claim of theirs, with which they have intimidated the whole world and which is their chief stronghold and defense, lo, how shamelessly and how senselessly it rages against God's Law and Word. For Christ decrees the very opposite. He takes from the bishops, theologians, and councils both the right and the power to judge doctrine and confers

them upon all men and upon all Christians in particular. . . . Here (John 10) you see plainly who has the right to judge teaching. Bishops, pope, theologians, and any one else have the power to teach; but the sheep are to judge whether what they teach is the voice of Christ or the voice of strangers. . . . Our fourth passage is again a saying of Christ's, in Matthew 24: 'Take heed that no man deceive you.' But what need is there of adducing further passages? All the warnings of St. Paul in Romans 16, 1 Corinthians 10, Galatians 2, 4, and 5, Colossians 2, and everywhere else, as well as all the sayings of all the Prophets in which they teach that doctrines of men are to be rejected, these altogether . . . assign this right and power to judge any teaching to the hearers with, urgent commands and on pain of losing their souls. That means that the hearers not only have the power and the right to judge all preaching, but are obliged to judge it under penalty of forfeiting the favor of Divine Majesty" (X:1540—1543).<sup>3)</sup>

3) Against Erasmus, who had declared: "To these authorities, the sacred Writing and the decrees of the Church, I submit my opinion in all things," Luther wrote: "What say you, Erasmus? Is it not enough that you submit your opinions to the Scriptures? Do you submit it to the decrees of the Church also? What can the Church decree that is not decreed in the Scriptures? If it can, where, then, remains the liberty and power of judging those who make the decrees? As Paul, 1 Cor. 14, teaches: 'Let others judge.' Are you not pleased that there should be anyone to judge the decrees of the Church, which, nevertheless, Paul enjoins? What new kind of religion and humility is this, that, by your own example, you would take away from us the power of judging the decrees of men and give it unto men without judgment? Where does the Scripture of God command us to do this?" (*The Bondage of the Will*, XVIII:1678.) Again: "If they should say that it is not for us to judge which is the Gospel or that it has not yet been decided by a council, this we do not concede to them; for Scripture does not authorize a council, but each and every Christian to judge of doctrines, 1 Cor. 14:29, and to know and avoid the wolves, Matt. 7:15" (XXI a:397). On the Gospel for the eighth Sunday after Trinity: "Christ, our Lord, here commands and authorizes all Christians to be judges of all doctrine, granting them the right to decide what is right or wrong. Among the false Christians this article has been changed and perverted for us nigh unto a thousand years, so that we had no right to judge, but simply had to accept without any examination what the Pope and the councils decreed. Now this Gospel lesson completely overthrows popery and all councils; for we are not obliged to observe what the Pope commands and what men decree. Hence I say once more: Grasp well this Gospel; for neither the Pope nor the councils nor anyone is given authority to decree and decide what is faith. For Christ says: 'Beware of false prophets!' Either the Gospel must be lying or else the Pope and his councils. Christ says: We have the right to judge all doctrines and whatever we are commanded to do or not to do. Here the Lord is not speaking to the Pope, but to all Christians. . . . Whence it clearly follows that I may indeed judge of doctrine" (XI:1394).—Clayton says: "The fundamental dogma in Luther's *Babylonian Captivity* is that no one, neither pope nor bishop, has any right to dictate to the individual Christian what he shall or shall not believe." That is absolutely correct. That is precisely what Luther taught and what every Christian believes in his heart.

God has given us the right of private judgment, and we shall not let this right be impaired by a hair's breadth. With Luther, we denounce the Pope as the temple robber who despoiled Christendom of her rights, as the temple robber who usurps God's prerogatives. "There is the *Clavis Scientiae*, the key of knowledge, by virtue of which the Pope has power over all laws, spiritual and secular, over all doctrine, both of God and of men, over all cases to be decided, over all questions and opinions. In sum, he is judge over all that is said and thought in heaven and earth. . . . What he wants to have taught, preached, judged, done, that must be taught, preached, judged, done; what he will not have taught, preached, judged, done, that may not be taught, preached, judged, done; and though it be God's Word or human right, it must be heresy; for he is Lord over all power and doctrine, over all dominions and right in heaven and on earth. . . . *Cuncta*: all Christendom throughout the whole world knows that no man may teach or judge the Pope, but all must submit to be judged by him. Item, Holy Scripture and God's Word, too, gets its authority from him, that is, *robur et auctoritatem accipere*; these are his very words. It has come to this, that neither God nor man may say to the Pope: What doest thou? or, By what right doest thou this? Nay, he may do and teach what he will, no man may hinder, censure, or correct him. Solches greulichen Bruellens ist viel in seinen geistlichen Rechten und Bullen" (*Schrift von den Schlüsseln*, XIX:933). "Now you can see what sort of spirit possessed these odious councils; robbing God, desecrating the holy place, and flying in the face of these clear Scripture passages, they took away from the people the right to judge and conferred it upon the popes. . . . It is the worst kind of temple robbery and a wicked flouting of God's Scripture" (XIX:343). "Who does not see that they rage against this clear word of Christ by shamelessly taking from the sheep the judgment of doctrine and appropriating it to themselves by their own impudent decree? Hence they are certainly to be regarded as murderers, thieves, wolves, and apostate Christians, who are here openly convicted not only of denying the Word of God, but of setting up and carrying out decrees in opposition to this Word. What else could you expect of Antichrist and his kingdom, according to Paul's prediction in 2 Thessalonians 2:34? . . . Thus we see how wickedly the despots dealt with us when they deprived us of this right and made it their own. For this thing alone they have richly deserved to be cast out of the Christian Church and driven forth as wolves, thieves, and murderers, who contrary to God's Word and will set themselves up as our rulers and masters" (X:1541, 1543).

2. "St. Paul taught us this when he wrote: 'Prove all things.'

But if we are to test all doctrine, *what other touchstone can we apply but Scripture?*" (Luther, XVIII:1294.) The Christian bases his judgments on religious questions solely and exclusively on Scripture. God's Word is the sole judge of doctrine, and when the Christians are commanded to "try the spirits," this standard is set up for them: "To the Law and to the Testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Is. 8:20). See also 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 1 Tim. 6:3 ff., etc. The Bereans were commended because "they searched the *Scriptures daily*, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). When God invested the Christians with the right to judge doctrine, He commanded them to make Scripture, not their reason, not their feelings, not their private ideas, the judge of doctrine. And so, when Luther urged the Christians to exercise their private judgment and test all religious teaching before accepting it, he told them in the same breath to test these teachings by Scripture. "What other touchstone can we apply but Scripture?"<sup>4)</sup>

We need to stress this second point because some men are saying that Luther, in exercising the right of private judgment, placed man in the seat of authority. But men who know anything about Luther know that Luther and the Lutheran Church require all men to subject their religious thought to Scripture and forbid them to teach anything that Scripture does not teach. What did Luther tell Erasmus? "What can the Church decree that is not decreed in the Scriptures? Is it not enough that you submit your opinion to the Scriptures?" It was Luther who said at Worms: "My conscience is bound in God's Word." Luther said: "Mache nicht Artikel des Glaubens aus deinen Gedanken, wie der Greuel zu Rom tut" (XV:1565). Again: "When you have a decision of Scripture, you need not look for any further decision either from the Fathers or from church councils" (III:503). Again: "We must know what we believe; we must believe what God's Word teaches, not what the Pope and councils order and decree. . . . If you are asked to give an account of your faith, answer: There is the foundation of my faith—Scripture; that will not fail me; I care nothing for what Pope and bishops teach and decree" (IX:1236 f.). And once more: "I have said that if they decide anything in the council against Scripture, we must believe Scripture more than the council. The Scriptures are our guarantee; they embolden us

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4) It is called *private judgment* in the sense that no man may dictate to me what I must think. But it is not a "private" judgment in the sense that I may act independently of Scripture in my religious thinking. The right of private judgment does not give us the right to think what we please, but it authorizes us to go to the Scriptures directly and learn from them what we should believe or not believe. (See *Theological Monthly*, 1924, p. 116.)

to challenge even an angel from heaven (Gal. 1:8), let alone a Pope and council. And why do they condemn me for this article? . . . Paul anathematizes an angel if he should teach anything contrary to Scripture; and I am not to have the right to disregard a man if he teaches otherwise? Why do you not condemn also *Panor. c. Significasti, de Elect.*, whom I quoted as saying that one must believe a layman when he offers clear Scripture or clear reason more than the Pope or council?" (XV:1549.)<sup>5)</sup>

J. Clayton is wrong when he says that "Luther placed man's private judgment in the seat of authority," "that feeling usurped the place of thought," that Luther's teaching "attracts where feeling is ranked above intellect," and that "against the authority of the supreme pontiff, Luther set up the authority of the individual believer" (pp. 19, 85, 117). Luther recognized but one authority—Scripture.<sup>6)</sup> John Adam Moehler (Catholic) believes that the Lutheran Church has this teaching on private judgment: "Here each one is to give himself up to the guidance of his own subjective feelings and fancies and to be certain that what he feels and thinks is truly felt and thought." And he declares: "A Church which would authorize anyone to find what he pleased in Scripture, such

5) The disciples of Luther say the same. Walther: "Wer mir nicht sagen kann: Das gebietet Christus, das sagt die Heilige Schrift, der kann nicht sagen: Das gebiete ich dir. Wenn aber ein Kind mir es beweisen kann, dann gehörche ich." Pieper: "Den Christen wird 1 Thess. 5:21 aufgetragen: 'Pruefen alles.' Sie sollen aber die Pruefung nicht nach ihrem eigenen Kopf, sondern nach der Heiligen Schrift anstellen" (*Vortraege ueber "Die Ev.-Luth. Kirche die wahre sichtbare Kirche"*, p. 40). Scripture the sole rule and judge, not your private opinion! In the words of Chemnitz, as reproduced by Pieper (op. cit., p. 56): "Jeder Christ hat zwar das Privilegium der Schriftauslegung, aber keiner darf sie auslegen nach seinem Sinn, sondern nach dem Sinn, den die Heilige Schrift an die Hand gibt" (op. cit., p. 56). A Lutheran Christian is so constituted that he suppresses his own thoughts; he would think only the thoughts that Scripture supplies. Werner Elert: "Doctrinal declarations and decisions can never be made in the Church in opposition to the authority of Christ (John 6:68; Luke 12:11 f.); nor are they of equal authority with that of Christ. The Church reaches her decisions only in this wise that she bows to Christ's authority and subjects herself to its judgments." (See *Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kirchenzeitung*, Oct. 23, 1936.) Formula of Concord: "The Holy Scriptures alone remain the only judge, rule, and standard, according to which, as the only test-stone, all dogmas shall and must be discerned and judged, as to whether they are good or evil, right or wrong" (*Concordia Triglotta*, p. 779). Augsburg Confession: "Nothing has been received on our part against Scripture or the Church Catholic. . . . We are ready to present ampler information according to the SCRIPTURES" (*Triglotta*, p. 95).

6) To be sure, Luther taught that one must obey his conscience. The conscience exercises a tremendous authority. Luther could not do otherwise at Worms, because his conscience was bound in the Word of God. The conscience back of the private judgment may be called an authority. But Luther did not place man's conscience in the seat of authority. The conscience exercises a legitimate authority only when it "is bound in God's Word."

a Church would thereby declare that it believed in nothing" (*Symbolum*, pp. 298, 341). Do not tell Luther that he taught such things. He would say, among other things, "I do not frame articles of faith out of my thoughts and feelings; I leave that to the Abomination which is Rome." (See above.) To sum up: "In Holy Scripture we must find the judgment as to whether a certain teaching is right or wrong. . . . Scripture passes the judgment and decides whether what one believes is right or wrong. Therefore we need not seek further testimony, that of the fathers or that of the councils, but rest satisfied with the plain, clear, lucid Scriptures" (III:503).

3. Have the Christians the right to go directly to Scripture and determine for themselves what Scripture says? This is the all-important point, and in denouncing the right of private judgment the Pope and his theologians have in mind particularly this point.

When the Christians inquire about God's will in this matter, they get the straight answer: "Search the Scriptures," John 5:39. They are told to follow the example of the Bereans who "searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so," Acts 17:11.<sup>7)</sup> And if God requires His people to test all teaching by Scripture (see above), He has certainly given them the right to use Scripture for this and the other purposes for which it was written, and, of course, has enabled them to understand it.

When the Christians seek information on this point from the Pope, they get the straight answer that they have no business to appeal to the Bible. They are told that they do not possess the spiritual intelligence to get the sense of what God's Word says. Only the Church can find the true sense. The laity—and, as it turns out, the priests and the bishops, too—must let the Pope interpret Scripture for them. When the Church interprets Rom. 3:28 to mean that justification is by works, the Christian is commanded by the Pope to accept this interpretation despite the protest of his intellect and conscience. The *Tridentinum* is very emphatic on this

7) Lenski's *Commentary*: "This is exactly what Paul and Silas desired—to have them examine, truly examine the Scriptures. That examination, properly made, could result in only one verdict: 'These things are so!' and that meant faith, intelligent faith, resting on the one true ground of faith, the Scriptures. . . . Here we have an excellent example of the right of private judgment, which is part of the royal priesthood of believers. Each man is to have direct access to the Scriptures, is to see and to judge for his own person and conscience. . . . Because Paul was an Apostle, he asked for this, demanded it. As an Apostle his whole preaching automatically rested on the Scriptures." Kretzmann's *Commentary*: "This fact they showed not only by their cheerful, unconditional willingness to accept the Word which Paul brought, but also by the earnestness and zeal with which they carefully searched the Scriptures every day, comparing prophecy and fulfillment and satisfying their own minds that the doctrine, as represented by Paul, agreed with the revelation of God."

point. The decree of Session the Fourth reads: "No one, relying on his own skill shall — in matters of faith and of morals pertaining to the edification of the Christian doctrine — wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church — whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures — hath held and doth hold. . . . Contraveners shall be made known by their ordinaries and be punished with the penalties by law established." The Creed of Pius IV solemnly repeats that. (See *Popular Symbolics*, p. 154.) Must we renounce the judgment of our intellect and conscience as to the meaning of Rom. 3:28 and any other statement of Scripture and wait till some other man tells us what the Scripture means? Cardinal James Gibbons tells men that that is their Christian duty. "The Church is the divinely appointed Custodian and Interpreter of the Bible. For her office of infallible Guide were superfluous if each individual could interpret the Bible for himself. God never intended the Bible to be the Christian's rule of faith independently of the living authority of the Church. . . . When a dispute arises in the Church regarding the sense of Scripture, the subject is referred to the Pope for final adjudication. . . . His sentence is final, irrevocable, and infallible. . . . Christ says to every Christian: Here, my child, is the Word of God, and with it I leave you an infallible interpreter. . . . I have appointed over it a Supreme Tribunal in the person of one 'to whom I have given the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven'" (*The Faith of Our Fathers*, pp. 77, 125, 135). "Cardinal Gibbons says: 'We have a man in Rome who is the successor of St. Peter and has received authority to decide for the whole world what they are to believe and do to be saved, and all you have to do is to surrender private judgment and submit all to him.' (See *Proceedings, English District*, 1927, p. 21.) Holy Scripture, says the Pope, is beyond the understanding of the common Christian.<sup>8)</sup>

8) There are two main reasons why the Pope cannot permit common Christians to judge his teaching on the basis of Scripture. The first reason is that he does not get all of his teachings out of Scripture; he has other sources of doctrine, which are not accessible to everybody. Cardinal Gibbons says: "A rule of faith, or a competent guide to heaven, must be able to instruct in all the truths necessary for salvation. Now, the Scriptures alone do not contain all the truths which a Christian is bound to believe, nor do they explicitly enjoin all the duties which he is obliged to practice. . . . The Catholic Church correctly teaches that our Lord and His Apostles inculcated certain important duties of religion which are not recorded by the inspired writers. . . . The Scriptures do not contain all the truths necessary for salvation" (*op. cit.*, p. 89). The *Catholic Encyclopedia* makes the same statement (*s. v. Tradition*). Cardinal Manning made a similar statement. (See *Popular Symbolics*, p. 155. See also *Lutheran Witness*, 1943, p. 401.) One of these other sources is mentioned in the Preface of a Catholic Bible published with the "Approbation of James Cardinal Gibbons": "The Sacred Scriptures form a part of the divine revelation, the other part being contained in

It would be better for the common Christian not to read the Bible at all. At one time a law to this effect was in full force. "Naturally, therefore, the laity were forbidden to read the Bible in their own tongue and, if they conversed publicly or privately on matters of faith, incurred excommunication by a bull of Alexander IV and after a year became amenable to the Inquisition.—*Sext. Dec. 5, 2*" (*Janus, op. cit.*, p. 131). In this way the evil inclination of the people to apply the test of Scripture to the teaching of their priests was suppressed in the Dark Ages. The situation is not changed essentially today. The Pope may put the Bible into the hands of the people, but that is done with the provision that they must understand it in the sense which he puts into it. That amounts to the same thing as forbidding them to read it. By all means the people must be kept from letting the Bible speak directly to them. By all means—"Contravengers shall be punished with the penalties by law established." The *Tridentinum* agrees with the bull of Alexander IV: Those who presume to deal with Scripture directly, to exercise the right of private judgment, are subject to excommunication.

And that means the higher clergy, too. For a time the bishops held out for a shred of the right of private judgment, but they surrendered every vestige of it in 1870. The dogma of papal infallibility declares that all questions of faith and morals must be referred to the Pope for the final, infallible decision. He alone can determine the true sense of Scripture. All the rest, laity, lower clergy, higher clergy, must bow to his judgment. If anyone presumes to exercise his own judgment, let him be anathema. The infallibility of the Pope and the right of private judgment cannot exist side by side.<sup>9)</sup> — May the Christian deal directly with the

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the depository of the Church and designated as the unwritten Word of God." (*See Theological Quarterly*, 1916, p. 179.) So it would be folly to tell the Pope that certain of his teachings have no basis in Scripture. He would tell these foolish objectors: These teachings I have gotten from my other source, which is not accessible to you. — His second reason is the common Christian's incapacity for understanding Scripture.

9) In "*Rome and the Newest Fashions in Religion*," published in 1875, Gladstone said: "The effect of it [the declaration of the pope's infallibility] was in the last resort to place the entire Christian religion in the breast of the Pope and to suspend it on his will. . . . The mere utterances of the Central See are laws, and they overrule at will all other laws. Over these utterances—in their preparation, as well as after their issue—no man has lawful control. . . . The Pope may tell you that there is no contrariety. If you have read, if you have studied, if you have seen, if you have humbly used every means of getting to the truth and you return to your point that there is contrariety, again his answer is ready: 'That assertion of yours is simply your private judgment; and your private judgment is just what my infallibility is meant and appointed to put down. . . . Idle then it is to tell us, finally, that the Pope is bound, by the moral and divine law, by the commandments of God, by the rules of the Gospel . . . for of these, one and all, the Pope himself, by himself, is the judge without appeal.' (*See Lutheran Witness*, June 21, 1886.)

Bible? Rome denounces that as the height of wickedness and intolerable arrogance.

Let the Christian consult Luther on this matter. Luther denounced the Pope's injunction as wicked arrogance and intolerable tyranny. In "An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility" he declared: "Christ also says in John 6:45 that all Christians shall be taught of God. . . . Therefore it is a wickedly invented fable, and they cannot produce a letter in defense of it that the interpretation of Scripture or the confirmation of its interpretation belongs to the Pope alone. They have usurped this power unto themselves. . . . Besides, we are all priests, as was said above. . . . All these and other texts (1 Cor. 2:15; 2 Cor. 4:13) should make us bold and free, and we should not allow the Spirit of liberty, as Paul calls Him, to be frightened off by the fabrications of the popes, but we ought to go boldly forward to test all that they do or leave undone according to our faithful understanding of Scripture. . . . Otherwise the prayer would have to run: 'I believe in the Pope at Rome' and so reduce the Christian Church to one man — which would be nothing else than a devilish and hellish error" (X:276 ff.).<sup>10)</sup> As Christ (John 5:39) and His Apostles placed the Bible in the hands of the common Christians and told them that if they possessed common intelligence and used their Christian intelligence, they will know what God is saying to them, so Luther tells God's people that they need not ask the Pope to unfold to them the meaning of God's Word and, furthermore, that it is their sacred duty to denounce the claim that the Pope is the judge of Scripture and the custodian of its meaning as devilish arrogance. "There are many who affirm that the Pope is above Scripture and has the right to interpret and change it at

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10) A few more Lutheran pronouncements. Chemnitz, *Examen Decr. Conc. Tridentini*, in the section *De Interpretatione Scripturae*: "The Synod holds that any interpretation of Scripture given by the bishops there assembled must be received without proof; they have invented the fable that only the bishops are able to interpret Scripture. Sed hoc falsum est . . . 1 Cor. 12:11; 1 Thess. 5:21; Acts 17:11. . . . — They expect us to accept without question, without any examination, investigation, and study on our part what they tell us is the meaning of Scripture; they claim the sole right of interpretation and demand that we accept their mere word as God's truth. . . . The papal theologians have claimed the magisterial and dictatorial right to force their interpretation upon the people and have robbed the Church of the right of judgment. Et hoc est, quod in isto canone impugnamus." Pieper: "Jeder Christ hat das Privilegium der Schriftauslegung." G. E. Seamon, in *The Pastor's Monthly*, 1935, p. 37: "Exercise your right of private judgment. Private judgment is that right which gives to every man the privilege, nay the duty, to search the Word for himself, and by so doing arrive at the knowledge of what he is to believe and how he is to live." W. Arndt, in *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, 1936, p. 690: "Every individual Christian is to read the Scriptures and to meditate on them (Ps. 1:2), which is equivalent to saying that he is to interpret them for himself."

will; as he, indeed, has been doing" (XIX:912).<sup>11)</sup> "But," Luther points out, "Holy Scripture is not the Jews' nor the heathen's nor the angels' much less the devils' chattel; Holy Scripture is God's, who alone spoke and wrote it—and He alone shall interpret and unfold it. Let the devils and men be the hearers" (XX:2103). And so Luther finally judges: "This sentence of Paul (Gal. 1:9) should remind us that all who hold that the Pope is the judge of Scripture and that the Church rules over Scripture are accursed" (IX:86).

The papistic teaching that *Scripture is obscure, its true meaning hidden from the common Christian*, is "a devilish and hellish error." God declares that His Book is clear and perspicuous, a Light in the darkness of this world, 2 Peter 1:19, a Lamp unto our feet and a Light unto our path, Ps. 119:105, also for the simple, Ps. 19:7, even for children, 2 Tim. 3:15. (See Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, I, p. 387.) That is not true, say the papists; the simple Christian cannot understand Scripture. They said it in the Dark Ages (see Baier, *Compendium*, 1, p. 175); they say it today. Cardinal Gibbons insists that because of "the hidden meaning" of Scripture an "infallible interpreter" is needed. "The Scriptures are not of themselves clear and intelligible even in matters of the highest importance" (*op. cit.*, p. 89).

In holy wrath Luther denounces this blasphemous disparagement of Holy Scripture thus: "It is a great and abominable tra-

11) Does the Pope really require the Christians to accept his "interpretation" even though their intelligence assures them that it is against the plain Scripture? None but Antichrist can do that; and the Pope does it. Chemnitz: "The papists claim the right to reject, whenever they please, the simple, native meaning of the words and to substitute a different sense, let the passage be as clear as the sun itself; exercising dictatorial authority, they require us to believe, not what Scripture plainly and manifestly says, but their dictatorial and arbitrary interpretation of Scripture. . . . They assert that these words (Rom. 3:28; Matt. 26:27, "all"; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Cor. 7:2, etc.) must not be understood as they read, but as they interpret them. And the canon under consideration gives them the right thus to play fast and loose with Scripture. Hosius says *de expresso verbo Dei*: 'If one has the interpretation of any Scripture passage as given by the Catholic Church, though he does not know or understand whether and how it agrees with the word of Scripture, he still has the very Word of God.' . . . With regard to a certain controverted point Erasmus freely admits that the papistical thesis is not based on firm and certain testimonies of Scripture and that the opposing thesis has better, clearer, and firmer Scripture proof back of it. 'However,' he adds, 'if the Church commands this, I'll believe it. For I bring my reason into captivity to the obedience of the Church.'" Gerhard: "The reason which Bellarmine gives is plainly an antichristian one. He says: 'If the ordained and called pastor and one who preaches, but is not called, teach contrary things, the people must by all means accept the teaching of their pastor and not that of the one who is not called, even if it should happen that their pastor were in error.' — Walther adds the comment: 'This passage shows how far the Catholics will go. Forsaking his usual caution, Bellarmine could pen this statement.' (See Baier, I, p. 188.)

ducing and reviling of Holy Scripture and all Christendom when men say that it is obscure and not so clear that anyone may understand it, to ground his faith on it, prove his faith by it. . . . There is no clearer book upon earth than Holy Writ; it excels every other book just as the sun excels every other light. . . . Be assured and certain that there is nothing clearer than the sun, than Holy Scripture" (V:334 ff.). All that men need to know for their salvation is set down in Scripture in such simple and clear language that the common man needs no further clarification, explanation, interpretation in order to understand it. There is not a single point of the saving doctrine couched in such cryptic language that it needs the mystic insight of the college of bishops or the special illumination of the Pope to unravel its meaning. "Therefore come forward, you [Erasmus] and all the sophists together, and produce one single mystery [revealed doctrine] which is still abstruse in the Scriptures" (XVIII:1681). When God declares that Scripture is a clear light and the Pope answers: No, it speaks in riddles, after the manner of the Delphic oracle, Luther cries out: "I lose my patience when they thus write and blaspheme the Scriptures and the Fathers . . . Ps. 119:105. . . . Did not all the Fathers go to Scripture for their proof? But if they had regarded Scripture as a dense fog — that is Emser's blasphemous and scandalous description of Scripture — they would have been senseless and mad by attempting to impart light and clearness to their teaching through that which is obscure; according to Emser's philosophy and dagger, the Fathers were mad! Nay, they surely held the Scriptures to be the Light of lights and most clear and certain; they appealed to it and depended upon it as the plainest and clearest teaching by which every teaching must be judged and proved. . . . Dass euch Schriftlaesterern einmal Gott gebiete; wie aeffet ihr uns so jaemmerlich" (XVIII:1293—1298).<sup>12)</sup>

Discussing the clarity of Scripture, Dr. Pieper calls attention to this significant statement: "Wiewohl nicht alle Christen die Gabe

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12) To be sure, there are difficult and obscure passages in the Bible, and some of these are found even in the doctrinal sections. But "in these there will be found nothing but what is found in other places, in the clear and plain passages. . . . If there is an obscure passage in Scripture, do not be alarmed, for it certainly contains the same truth which is taught plainly in another passage" (V:335, 338). — Speaking of "the right of private judgment" and "the duty of individual research," *The Pulpit Commentary* says: "It is the duty of every Christian man to test all new doctrine by the teaching of the divine Word. We are to search the Scriptures whether these things are so or not. There is no excuse for declining to do this. . . . God has so formed and written the Word that it is level to our understanding; He has given us the necessary mental faculties to comprehend it; and He has made the substance of it so simple, plain, appreciable that the wayfaring man may rejoice in it. It is not the recondite, abstruse, mystical utterance which some disclosures are. . ." (On Acts 17:14.)

der Auslegung haben, so koennen sie doch alle Auslegungen kontrollieren, ob sie den Sinn der Schrift treffen oder nicht" (*Vortraege*, p. 56). No, not every Christian has the special gift of interpretation; not all of them are trained exegetes. But all of them are perfectly able to understand the simple words by which God has revealed the saving doctrine and are therefore able to control the "interpretation" of these passages. The simple Christian can here tell the most learned exegete: You are right, or, you are wrong. Rom. 3:28 is made up of intelligible words. And when the Catholic "interpreters" employ a great amount of skill to prove that certain classes of works are here called for as necessary for justification, the simple Christian will tell them: I know more about this than you; all works are excluded.—Dr. Pieper makes a similar statement in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1888, p. 3: "So ist Prof. Ritschl auch als wissenschaftlicher Lehrer der Kontrolle aller Christen unterstellt." (Note that the right of private judgment needs to be defended not only against the Pope, but also, as we shall later show, against various other kinds of theologians).<sup>18)</sup>

13) How much "interpretation" does Scripture need in order to become intelligible to the common Christian? Luther: ". . . auf dass der Widerpart, mit dem hellen Licht ueberwunden, sehe und bekenne, dass die Sprueche Gottes allein sind und keines Menschen Auslegung beduerfen" (XVIII:1924). "*Scriptura ipsa per se rectissima, facillima, apertissima sui ipsius interpres*" (Weimar Ed., VII:97). *Scripture interprets itself!* This does not only mean that the occasional obscure passages should be placed in the light of the clear passages, but it means, first of all, that, as a rule, the words of Scripture carry their meaning in themselves and by their clarity restrain the reader from putting any other meaning into them. Men think a lot of exegesis is needed in order to explain Scripture. No, says Luther, let the text — *nuda Scriptura* — speak for itself. "Be it known, then, that Scripture, without any gloss, is the sun and the sole light from which all teachers receive their light and not the contrary. . . . The study that makes one fit for warfare is to be at home in Scripture and, as St. Paul says, able to contend with abundant clear passages, without any glosses or commentaries, as with a bared and drawn sword. . . . The words of God stand alone and do not need some man's interpretation" (XVIII:1293 f.). "When the Christian hears Scripture, it is so clear and plain that aside from the glosses and commentaries of all the Fathers and teachers, he says: That is right; that is what I believe" (V:335). — We prize the work of the exegetes. They throw light on some obscure passages. But the real value, "the real business and foremost duty of the exegetes consists in this, that they tie down the flighty spirit of man to the simple text and, where it has departed therefrom, lead it back to the simple text" (Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, I, p. 435). In the words of Dr. W. H. T. Dau: "To detect a faulty interpretation, what other means is there than the very text which has been wrongly expounded? The real interpreter of Scripture is Scripture itself or the Spirit who gave, and who lays hold with His inward testimony on those whom He approaches with, the Word" (*Walther and the Church*, p. 53). Chemnitz-Augustine: "Many passages of Scripture are made up of clear and lucid words, which do not need a lot of erudite exegesis but interpret themselves. And in these clear passages everything that pertains to faith and morals is found." (See Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 291.)

The papists object, further, that the common Christians lack the mental and spiritual faculties to get the sense of Scripture for themselves. That is "a devilish and hellish" malignity of God's people. "Alle haben gleiche Gewalt an dem Worte Gottes" (Luther, XIX:117). God's Word is for all of His people, and He has equipped everyone of them with the spiritual intelligence needed to understand it and operate with it. Luther: "Christ says in John 6:45 that all Christians shall be taught of God" (X:277). It is an insult to the Christians and to God's work in them to treat them as spiritual imbeciles. The Apostles did not so treat them. St. Paul did not so treat Timothy and Eunice and Lois. He spoke of all Christians as "enriched with all knowledge," Rom. 15:14; 1 Cor. 1:4. The *Pulpit Commentary* on 1 John 2:20, 27 and 4:1 says: "The unction from above imparts spiritual discernment. . . . The Apostle's confidence in the Christian discernment of his hearers. . . . Each Christian is anointed with the Spirit, 2 Cor. 1:21. The Christian has the basis of all knowledge, John 16:13 f.; 1 Cor. 2:9-16; John 14:26." The faith by which the common Christian has the right understanding of Scripture in no wise differs from the faith of the most learned theologian.

The papists claim to have Scriptural authority for speaking of the low intelligence of the common Christians. "They appealed to the passages in which the Christians are figuratively called 'sheep,' John 10:16 f.; 21:16 f. Our theologians answered: The Christians are indeed compared to sheep; however, not to foolish sheep, but, to wise sheep that can distinguish well the voice of Christ from the voice of the stranger and pseudoshepherd, John 10:4 f., 27: 'My sheep hear My voice'" (Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 424).

Have the Christians the right of private judgment? Luther: "Observe that Christ here (Matt. 7:15) assigns the judgment not to the prophets and teachers, but to the pupils, or the sheep. For how could one beware of false prophets unless one examined, judged, and gave a decision on their teaching? . . . All teachers should and must, therefore, be subject with their teaching to the judgment of the hearers" (X:1542).

The papists claim, finally, that Scripture itself, in so many words, forbids the ordinary man to read the Scriptures without the priest or bishop or pope telling him what it means. Di Bruno: "The authoritative interpretation of Scripture made by the lawful successors of the Apostles is the true one and truly the Word of God. . . . Hence St. Peter condemns private interpretation of Scripture, saying: 'No prophecy (or explanation) of Scripture is made by private interpretation.' 2 Peter 1:20." (*Catholic Belief*, p. 40—Italics in original.) But this text does not say and does not intimate in any way that the interpretation of Scripture belongs to the

hierarchy and not to all Christians. The simple Christian will ask: Which word in the text says that only the Pope can tell what Scripture means? What the text does say, is: "Understanding this, at the outset, that no prophetic Scripture allows a man to interpret it by himself." Scripture interprets itself! No man may interpret it to suit his own ideas. No man may force his ideas into the words of Scripture. Luther: "Do not think that you shall explain Scripture by your reason and wisdom. Any interpretation of Scripture by any of the Fathers which is thus derived is here (2 Peter 1:20) rejected and condemned. . . . What a man adds of his own cannot serve to get the true sense of Scripture" (IX:1362).<sup>14)</sup> The opposites are not "private interpretation" and the interpretation of the Pope, but "private interpretation" and Scripture itself. What is forbidden here is the sort of exegesis to which Catholic theology is addicted. "For instance," says Luther in the passage just quoted, "when they refer Matt. 16:18 to the Pope, that is a human, private interpretation, spun out of their own thoughts."

No, 2 Peter 1:20 does not deny or restrict the right of the private Christian, the layman, to study Scripture for himself. Walther, quoting Kromayer: "We must give a more ready ear to a plain layman when he adduces Scripture than to a whole council which takes a stand contrary to Scripture. . . . Even though a whole council expounded Scripture contrary to the intention of one of the holy writers, we should look upon such an exposition as a private interpretation (2 Peter 1:20). Die Privat-Meinung und Privat-Schrift-auslegung, nicht die Auslegung eines Privaten wird verworfen" (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1868, p. 169. CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, 1939, p. 594). And this right of private judgment in studying Scripture we maintain. We thank Luther for recovering this right for Christendom: "It is a wickedly invented fable that the interpretation of Scripture belongs to the Pope alone."

4. According to Luther, says Clayton, "the notion that the Pope has the right to interpret the Sacred Scriptures must be destroyed, since to all baptized believers is given the priesthood." Correct! *The right of private judgment is one of the prerogatives of the royal*

14) Hofmann on our passage: "Es unterliegt keiner aus eigenem Verstande entnommenen Deutung des Lesers. Von aller Schriftweisung gilt, dass sie nicht eigener Deutung unterliegt, nicht Sache eigener Deutung ist." (See *Lehre und Wehre*, 1918, p.114. Read the entire article.) Zahn's *Commentary*: What the text warns men against is "bei der Erklaerung und praktischen Verwertung des ihnen vorliegenden Weissagungswortes ihre eigne Vernunft schalten und walten zu lassen." Stoeckhardt: "Keine Weissagung in der Schrift ist von eigener, menschlicher Deutung und Auslegung abhaengig" (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1886, p. 214). Exactly as Moffatt translates: "Understanding this that no prophetic Scripture allows a man to interpret it by himself."—This matter is exhaustively treated in CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, 1936, p. 685 ff.

**priesthood.** Luther: "No one can deny that every Christian has God's Word and is taught of God and anointed by Him to the priesthood, John 6:45; 1 Peter 2:9. Now, if Christians have the Word of God and are anointed by Him, they are in duty bound to confess, preach, and spread this Word" (X:1543). Again: "It is a wickedly invented fable that the interpretation of Scripture belongs to the Pope alone. . . . If we are all priests, as was said above . . . why should we not also have the power to test and judge what is correct and incorrect in matters of faith? What becomes of the word of Paul in 1 Cor. 2:15 and 2 Cor. 4:13? Why, then, should we not perceive what squares with faith and what does not, as well as an unbelieving pope?" (X:278).—"Jesus has made us kings and priests unto God" (Rev. 1:6). Antichrist will not have it so.<sup>15)</sup>

5. Let us emphasize, by way of recapitulation, that the *laity* does indeed possess the right of private judgment. A man does not acquire the right to judge doctrine through the Catholic Sacrament of Holy Orders nor through the Episcopalian Apostolic Succession nor through the call and ordination nor by taking a special course in theology. No, the ordinary Christian possesses it, the common layman. Hear Luther: "In the past the laymen were forbidden to read the Bible, and it was a clever move on the part of the devil to take the Bible from the people. . . . We must confess that St. Peter spoke these words (1 Peter 3:15) to all Christians, pastors and laymen, men and women, young and old, no matter to what station they may belong. It follows from this that every Christian should know the reason of his faith and be able to speak up for it and defend it at any time. . . . Hence we must know what

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15) "Christus hat seine Christen nicht zu so miserablen Aschenbroedeln gemacht, die still und stumm jedem Wolf in den Rachen laufen; die alles einfach hinzunehmen und herunterzuschlucken haben: geistliche Seelenspeise oder Seelengift, Gottes Wahrheit oder Satansbetrug; die sich mit verbundenen Augen fuehren lassen und es darauf ankommen lassen, ob es gen Himmel geht oder zur Hoelle. Nein, er hat sie zu muendigen Priestern gemacht, die 'selbst von Gott gelehrt sind,' John 8:45; 1 Thess. 4:9; 1 John 9:24. Sie sollen und duerfen alle Lehre pruefen und urteilen, einerlei, wo und an wem sie sie finden. Und dazu hat er selbst sie befahigt, indem er ihnen sein helles und vollkommenes Wort der Wahrheit als Richtscheit in die Hand gegeben hat" ("Proceedings, Illinois District, 1898, p. 56). *The Pastor's Monthly*, 1931, p. 12 ff.: "If we are to be priests, we must have direct and free access to God; otherwise our priesthood is but an idle dream. As Dr. Lenski says: 'Nobody in the world dare say, You must first come to me, and I will tell you what God has to say to you, or whether He has anything to say to you at all! Whoever attempts such a thing snatches your kingship away and makes himself a king over you, turning you into a slave. He robs you of your priesthood and makes himself priest over you, turning you into a priest-ridden dupe.' . . . But if we are to be true priests and have a truly open Bible, that must also include the right of private judgment. If we are not allowed to interpret the Bible for ourselves, but blindly accept the interpretations which others give us, we are again made dependent upon others and really have no access to God as His royal priests."

we believe, namely, whatever the Word of God teaches and not what the Pope or councils tell you to believe. For you must by no means trust in men, but base your faith solely on the Word of God" (IX:1235). Again: "It behooves every Christian to espouse the cause of faith, to understand and defend it, and to rebuke all errors" (X:278). It is expected of the common Christian "that, in all affairs and cases, he can advise, help, comfort, judge, and decide both spiritual and temporal matters and is qualified to sit in judgment upon all doctrines, estates, spirits, laws, and whatever else is in the world" (The Large Catechism, *Triglotta*, p. 573). Again: "Since, then, we have become Christians through this Priest and His priestly office and in Baptism have been incorporated into Him through faith, we possess also the privilege and authority to teach and confess before all men the divine Word which we have received of Him, everyone according to his calling and condition. For though we are not all in the public ministry, nevertheless every Christian may teach, instruct, admonish, comfort, and reprove his neighbor with the Word of God wherever this is necessary, as, for instance, when father and mother deal with their children, and servants, brothers, neighbors, burghers, peasants, with one another. For certainly a Christian can instruct the ignorant and weak in the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, etc., and admonish them; and everyone who hears this Christian is in duty bound to receive it of him as God's Word and to confess it with him publicly" (V:1038). And once more: "The time to keep silence has passed, and the time to speak is come. I have brought together some matters touching the reform of the Christian Estate in the hope that God may deign to help His Church through the efforts of the laity, since the clergy, to whom this task more properly belongs, have grown altogether indifferent" (X:266. See also XI:1394; XV:1549; XIX:341; etc.).<sup>16)</sup>

16) M. Doerne: "Wer hat zuerst die sogenannten Laien erinnert, dass auch von ihnen derselbe priesterliche Dienst gefordert ist wie vom Pfarrer? Wer hat die kurzschiessige Gegeneuberstellung von Amt und Gemeinde ueberwunden durch eine theologische Synthese, die mit der Hohheit des Predigtamts auch die Verantwortung der Gemeinde und mit dem wiedergewonnenen Ernst evangelischen Hirtendienstes auch die Ehre der Gemeinde gesteigert hat? Das war Martin Luther" (*Theologia Militans* X, p. 57). And in the spirit of Luther Walther declares: "According to divine right the function of passing judgment on doctrine belongs indeed to the ministry of preaching. However, also the laymen have this right, and for this reason they also have a seat and vote with the preachers in church courts and councils" (Thesis X, *Kirche und Amt*. See *Walther and the Church*, p. 85). And Pieper: "Most certainly it is an acknowledged fact that it is the duty not only of Christian ministers but of all Christians without exception to be ceaselessly active in preaching the Gospel at home and abroad. That is God's own will and ordinance. There is indeed a laymen's movement which God Himself has commanded" (*What Is Christianity?* p. 101). And O. H. Nebe: "Es ist

The Christian layman, the simple peasant, has the right of private judgment.—And "he is doing an accursed thing who impairs this right by a hair's breadth." Is such strong language called for? Let us see. (*To be continued*)

TH. ENGELDER

### Harnack's Theological Positions

The inclusion of Adolf Harnack in this series of articles on epoch-making modern theological leaders who promoted error requires an explanation. Strictly speaking, he was not the founder of a school of theology. He did not teach a system of doctrine of his own. In him we are dealing with a church historian, and not with a dogmatician. Still, when the persons to be treated in this series were listed, it was felt that Harnack's name would have to be included because in the period extending from about 1895 to 1920 he was the most frequently mentioned theologian of Germany, probably of the whole world, and exerted a vast influence in Europe and America.

#### I

Adolf (v.) Harnack was born 1851 in Dorpat in Livonia, where his father was theological professor at the time. Two years later the father was called to a chair of theology at Erlangen, which he occupied till 1866, when he returned to the University of Dorpat. Adolf, after absolving the theological course in the latter school, studied in Leipzig, where he earned his doctor's degree. His dissertation gave an indication of his chief interest; it dealt with the critical study of the sources pertaining to the history of Gnosticism. In Leipzig he began his teaching career as *professor extraordinarius* in 1876. In 1879 he was appointed to a regular professorship in Giessen, and in 1886 he was transferred to Marburg. Two years later he was called to the University of Berlin, where he served till his retirement in 1921. His death occurred June 10, 1930.

Harnack was the son of a staunch conservative Lutheran theologian, Theodosius Harnack (1817—1889), who was universally considered a pillar of orthodoxy. Besides other important books

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wichtig zu sehen, dass in jeder christlichen Aussage, etwa in der eines Bauern, dass er lutherischer Christ sei, bereits ein theologisches Urteil enthalten ist, dass also im strengen Sinn jeder Christ zugleich auch *Theologe ist*" (*Theologia Militans*, XI, p. 13). Comment of CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, 1937, p. 743: "Da die Theologie ihrem eigentlichen Wesen nach nichts anderes tut, als die Aussagen der Schrift zu wiederholen, und die Schrift ein so einfaches, klares Buch ist, so muss man darauf gefasst sein, von dem gottesfuerchtigen, in der Schrift lebenden Bauern treffliche theologische Urteile zu hoeren."

the father wrote a work which is highly praised in Lutheran circles and in 1927 was issued in a new edition, *Luthers Theologie*. When Adolf began to publish views that were negative and destructive with respect to the old Lutheran position, the father was deeply grieved. He wrote to his son, "If I had been more faithful, you would take a more positive stand than you actually do. I beg you in the name of everything that is dear and precious to you, my very dear Adolf, do not permit yourself to be influenced nor let your vanity be tickled by modern theology with its negative criticism, to which it does not make any difference whether it tears one page out of the Bible or rejects everything. Do not follow the consciousness (*Bewusstsein*) of the times, but that of the Church, for between these two we have to choose."<sup>1)</sup>

The expostulations of the father were in vain; the son continued in the modernistic course, which he had come to regard as the right one, though he always spoke of his father with the highest respect.<sup>2)</sup>

1) Agnes v. Zahn-Harnack, *Adolf v. Harnack*, p. 106 f. The author is the daughter of Harnack, whose biography of her father, a learned work of 579 pages, appeared in 1936. One wonders to what extent the instruction Harnack had received in the days of childhood and youth were clung to by him in spite of negative views which he espoused. His daughter relates that when one of his children had been carried off by death, he often took his other children to the grave and there taught them the beautiful prayer of Valerius Herberger, which his own father had taught him at the grave of his (Adolf's) mother, who had died comparatively young:

Schreib meinen Nam'n aufs beste  
Ins Buch des Lebens ein;  
Und bind mein' Seel' fein feste  
Ins schoene Buendlein  
Der'r, die im Himmel gruenen  
Und vor dir leben frei;  
So will ich allzeit ruehmen;  
Dass dein Herz treue sei. — *Op. cit.*, p. 189.

One is reminded of the remark of Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, the famous Greek scholar, concerning Wellhausen, the negative Old Testament critic, that the latter every day spoke the old Lutheran table prayer "Komm, Herr Jesu, sei unser Gast," etc. Cf. *Erinnerungen*, p. 189. How is this use of old orthodox prayers to be evaluated? Was it merely an adherence to forms that had become beloved through long acquaintance with them, or did it perhaps betoken a clinging of the heart to the Savior even though the profession of the mouth denied His teachings? Was it a case of happy inconsistency such as we meet quite frequently? Who can decide this question?

2) With sadness one reads of this apostasy, which, alas! had several famous parallels about the turn of the century. Bernhard Weiss, chief author for the various editions of Meyer's Commentary after the latter's death and still a fairly conservative theologian, had a son who was quite radical in his theological views, Johannes Weiss; Franz Delitzsch, in his youth a close friend of C. F. W. Walther, had a son, Friedrich, who as an advocate of Pan-Babylonianism held and sponsored positions that were entirely negative.

## II

Harnack must have been a person of rarest intellectual gifts and attainments. Soon after he had begun to teach in Leipzig, his classroom became crowded; and this popularity of his continued to the very last. When in the winter of 1899—1900 he delivered his lectures, one a week and sixteen in number, on "What Is Christianity?" (*Das Wesen des Christentums*), the time selected was seven o'clock in the morning. We are told that the classroom was filled and that from 600 to 1,000 students, representing the various departments of the university, gathered about him at that forbidding hour. One of the students, so it is reported, who was an expert stenographer, took down accurately what the professor said and soon after the completion of the series presented him with a copy of his remarks.<sup>3)</sup>

The fame of Harnack soon spread to other countries, and highly flattering calls reached him. Among the institutions that desired to obtain his services was Harvard University, which twice invited him to join its faculty. This invitation was, of course, significant. It indicated definitely the brand of theology which he was known to teach. In the period immediately after the First World War the German Government offered Harnack the position of ambassador in Washington. Soon after he had come to Berlin, he was elected as a member of the Prussian Academy of Science, a much coveted distinction. When at the 200th anniversary the history of this academy had to be written, he was chosen for the task. In 1905 he was made head of the Royal Library. Later he was elected president of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society for the Promotion of the Sciences, which was founded to mark the centennial of the establishment of the University of Berlin. As early as 1881 he was made an editor of the influential *Theologische Literaturzeitung* and together with Schuerer conducted this journal till 1910.

Harnack was a man of astonishing industry, careful in research, willing to sacrifice hours in determining a little item of scholarship. Besides, he possessed high artistic gifts for putting his thoughts into proper and attractive form and the ability to produce with ease and rapidity. He wrote incessantly. In 1878, when he was only twenty-seven years old, the list of articles, brochures, and books written by him contained 90 titles.<sup>4)</sup> Among the gifts presented to him at his seventy-fifth birthday was a carefully prepared bibliography of all his writings, which contained 1,500 items.<sup>5)</sup>

3) Cf. McCown, *The Search for the Real Jesus*, Charles Scribner's Sons, p. 229. McCown takes his information from the translator's preface (p. v) of Harnack's *What Is Christianity?* which will be referred to below.

4) Agnes v. Zahn-Harnack, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

5) *Ibid.*, p. 525.

In reading of this man, his colossal labors, his eagerness to work and to spend himself in the service of scientific research and of what he considered the truth, one cannot help thinking of the athletes whose training Paul describes vividly and of whom he says 1 Cor. 9:25: "They do it to obtain a corruptible crown," and of the words of the Savior in Luke 16:8, "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

### III

As mentioned before, Harnack's field was church history, especially the history of dogma. The work that made him famous and will probably continue to be regarded his chief production was his *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, which appeared in three massive volumes 1886—1889. In 1909 its fourth edition was published. With special interest he investigated the history and literature of the first Christian centuries. Together with Gebhardt and Zahn he published a critical edition of the Apostolic Fathers and a number of volumes having the title *Texte und Untersuchungen*, which are extremely valuable on account of the source material they contain. His history of the literature of the early Christian Church (*Altchristliche Literaturgeschichte*), consisting of three volumes, is another monumental work of the highest significance for all New Testament scholars. In 1902 he published the celebrated book *Geschichte der Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*, which is well known in English-speaking theological schools under the title *Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*. A work on the origin and development of church polity and ecclesiastical law during the first two centuries, produced in 1910, (*Entstehung und Entwicklung der Kirchenverfassung und des Kirchenrechts in den zwei ersten Jahrhunderten*) must be mentioned, too. Harnack's acquaintance with the early history of the Christian Church was so minute and thorough that (as Professor Goodspeed related in a lecture which I heard) when a certain old document had been discovered in which a proper name appeared and the discoverers were unable to identify the person named, Harnack at once supplied the information. His various writings on the Gnostic Marcion here come to mind. In addition to the above productions, his work that has to do with New Testament introduction and interpretation must be alluded to. Among other works he wrote the monographs entitled *Lukas der Arzt*, *Sprueche und Reden Jesu*, and *Die Apostelgeschichte*. An ardent adherent of the "two-source" hypothesis as to the origin of the Synoptic Gospels, he presented in *Sprueche und Reden Jesu* what he considered the content of the conjectural collection of sayings of Jesus which is referred to

by scholars as Logia or Q. In the works on Luke and Acts he vindicated the view that Luke, the companion of Paul, was the author of Acts. In fact, Harnack's writings after 1900 frequently had a conservative tinge and submitted proof that the old traditional view on this or that point was historically correct.

Before closing the chapter on Harnack's publications, a word must be said to characterize his *History of Dogma*. In it Harnack manifests his astounding acquaintance with the details of church history and of the sources and his ability to present the numerous facts and tendencies of the period in one harmonious and consistent whole. The power and brilliancy of the presentation are acknowledged by all critics. The work, however, is distinctly Modernistic. Besides other destructive features, it endeavors to show that the doctrines which we hold and confess in our Lutheran dogmatics are the result of a process of development and not taken from the Scriptures. He regarded the dogmas of the Christian Church in the second and third centuries as products of the Greek spirit which reacted in its own way to the preaching of the Gospel. Applying thus the idea of development to the history of Christian teachings, he placed himself in agreement with the prevailing notions of his day, which worshiped at the altar of evolution; and thus he destroyed, wherever his views were accepted, the belief that our doctrines are God-given and hence must remain inviolate.

#### IV

This observation may lead us to think of Harnack's theological views in general. To understand his positions, it should be said, in the first place, that he was, and desired to be, a disciple of A. Ritschl, whose works he had begun to study in Dorpat and whose personal acquaintance he made later on. In a review which he wrote in 1897 he stated, "The future of Protestantism as a religion and as a spiritual force lies in the direction which Ritschl has marked."<sup>6)</sup> In a letter addressed to Ritschl in 1886 he wrote, "I feel deeply that I must thank you for everything that I have learned and received from you and assure you of my abiding gratitude. As in the past, the firm consistency and power of your evangelical insight and the consciousness of not having taught in vain will be a shield to you against all attacks."<sup>7)</sup>

What Harnack admired in Ritschl was, for one thing, the "freie Forschung" principle, that is, the view that the scholar should not be bound by any *a priori* considerations, such as the authority of the Bible or of the confessional writings, but should

6) *Reden und Aufsaetze*, II<sup>2</sup>, p. 355.

7) Agnes v. Zahn-Harnack, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

be permitted to investigate and to state his findings with full freedom. At this point Ritschl had totally parted company with confessional Lutheranism. That fidelity to the Scriptures and adherence to the Lutheran Confessions are for a faithful Lutheran not a yoke, but an obedience which his heart is eager to render, because he has found the Scriptures to be the Word of Life and the Lutheran Confessions a forceful expression of his own faith, Ritschl and Harnack did not acknowledge, because they did not believe the Scriptures in their fullness, nor did the Lutheran confessional writings voice their own deepest convictions.<sup>8)</sup> There was, moreover, something in the method of Ritschl which appealed to young Harnack. The apparently minor questions which other dogmaticians dwelt on at great length before they arrived at their chief themes were largely ignored, and without delay the student was introduced to the person of Jesus, forgiveness of sins, and the Christian congregation.<sup>9)</sup>

Next Harnack approved of Ritschl's attack on "speculative rationalism," which had come to occupy a big field in Protestant theology. Ritschl was opposed to metaphysics as a factor in theological thinking and definitions, and here he found in Harnack a willing disciple.<sup>10)</sup> A related factor should be mentioned in this connection. Harnack admired Ritschl's earnest endeavor to gain a true understanding of God and of Christ through the study of history, especially the historical Jesus. With ecstasy he speaks of Ritschl's surrender of philosophy in favor of history ("der Verzicht auf die Philosophie zugunsten der Geschichte"). His own interests were so largely historical and connected with historical research that in this regard, too, Ritschl's attitude evoked his joyful assent.<sup>11)</sup>

Again, Harnack was of one mind with Ritschl in the latter's polemics against pietism, that is, the unsound, morbid piety ("ungesunde Froemmigkeit") which parades as true Bible Christianity. He was willing to admit that Ritschl had been somewhat extreme in his opposition to "pietistic orthodoxy," but as to his essential position, he felt he could grant him his full support.<sup>12)</sup>

But he did not accept Ritschl's views in every respect. He says in the essay just referred to that his divergence from Ritschl consists in his different attitude toward the New Testament and his extension of the field belonging to the history of religion and

8) *Reden und Aufsaetze*, vol. II<sup>2</sup>, p. 367, where Ritschl's rejection of the "Inspirationsdogma" and of the "Unterwerfung des Dogmatikers unter jede Schriftlehre" are alluded to with approval.

9) *Ibid.*, p. 361.                    11) *Ibid.*, p. 355.

10) *Ibid.*, p. 363.                    12) *Ibid.*, p. 364.

hence of systematic theology.<sup>13)</sup> In explanation it should be said that Ritschl had still spoken of the "reine biblische Offenbarungsglaube," which he maintained his system represented, while Harnack was of the opinion that such a pure Biblical faith based on revelation is untenable.<sup>14)</sup> For Harnack, sad to say, the New Testament was not a collection of divine writings possessing unique authority. He was willing to say that they were historical documents of eminent worth, but hardly more. In other words, he believed that Ritschl in holding that the faith he taught was based on Biblical revelation had fallen into an inconsistency; for Ritschl, too, so Harnack avers, esteemed the Bible as a source for Christian doctrine merely on account of its "primary historical status."<sup>15)</sup> As to the field of the history of religion, Ritschl had not been much interested in what pagan writers had said on matters of worship and religious belief, while Harnack held that all such utterances should be considered by those who desired to do justice to this field. Besides, he not only, as said before, did not share in its intensity Ritschl's aversion to pietism, but abandoned the latter's violent antagonism to Roman Catholic views as to the truly pious life.<sup>16)</sup> As is evident from what has been said, Harnack departed still more radically from the old Lutheran faith, the faith taught in the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, than Ritschl had done.

## V

At various times the utter break on the part of Harnack with the old Christian faith became the subject of wide discussion. When he was called to Berlin, the Evangelische Oberkirchenrat, the ecclesiastical commission which formed the head of the Evangelical Church in Prussia, protested against his appointment. Harnack, so it was stated, had expressed doubts as to the apostolic origin of the fourth Gospel, 1 Peter, and Ephesians; he had denied the reliability of the Scripture accounts relative to miracles, especially those pertaining to the virgin birth of Christ, His resurrection, and His ascension; and he had denied that Christ Himself had instituted trinitarian Baptism. In spite of these charges, which were not declared untrue by Harnack, he was appointed — a sign how little the government authorities cared for true orthodoxy. All who had eyes to see could perceive that Harnack did not shrink from sponsoring very radical views of negative higher

13) *Ibid.*, p. 359.

14) *Ibid.*, p. 357.

15) "Sie alle" [that is, the followers of Ritschl] "schaetzen wie Ritschl die Bibel nur um ihrer geschichtlichen Urspruenglichkeit willen als Quelle fuer die christliche Glaubenslehre und wollen ihr die Autoritaet aus Offenbarung nicht zugestehen." *Ibid.*, p. 367.

16) *Ibid.*, p. 359.

criticism and abetted modern unbelief which still desired to pose as religious.<sup>17)</sup>

A few years later (1892) there came a controversy on the Apostles' Creed (*Streit um das Apostolikum*). Harnack publicly declared that he regarded belief in the resurrection of the body as conflicting with the teachings of Paul and that in his view acceptance of the teaching pertaining to the virgin birth of the Savior was something optional.<sup>18)</sup> It became evident that Harnack with his eminent gifts was one of the most dangerous enemies Bible Christianity had to face.

The climax of Harnack's career, both as to his popularity in liberal circles and his antagonism to the old evangelical truth, was reached in the lectures mentioned above on "What Is Christianity?" In *Lehre und Wehre* (Vol. 47, 1901, pp. 321 ff. and 353 ff.) Dr. Pieper published a critique, and Dr. A. L. Graebner wrote an article for the *Theological Quarterly* having the very apt caption "What Is Christianity? Answered by One Who Does Not Know" (Vol. VI, 1902, pp. 95 ff.). The lectures lying before me in the translation of Thomas Bailey Saunders<sup>19)</sup> are both popular and comprehensive in their exposition of Harnack's views on the nature of the Christian religion. The excitement which they created was due largely to the unusual circumstances of their delivery and the acclaim with which they were received by the classroom auditors. They are thoroughly naturalistic, giving expression to the positions which one arrives at when from the Gospel accounts of the life of Christ and from the Epistles everything that is miraculous is eliminated. In the third lecture Harnack submits what he considers the chief elements in the teaching of Jesus, "First, the kingdom of God and its coming; secondly, God the Father and the infinite value of the human soul; thirdly, the higher righteousness and the commandment of love."<sup>20)</sup> The reader sees that the doctrines of the deity of Christ and of His substitutionary atonement are not accorded a place in this summary. One can understand why a Jewish rabbi is reported to have said that Harnack's lectures did not answer the question What is Christianity? but, What is Judaism?<sup>21)</sup> Albert Schweitzer, too, the famous New Testament scholar and missionary, was quite caustic in his criticism. He said that Harnack gave the Gospel such a form that he could without difficulty travel with it

17) Cf. Agnes von Zahn-Harnack, *op. cit.*, pp. 156—172.

18) *Ibid.*, pp. 193—214; Harnack, *Reden und Aufsaetze*, I<sup>2</sup>, pp. 219 to 298.

19) Published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1901. Second edition, 1903.

20) Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* Translation by Saunders, p. 55.

21) *Hibbert Journal*, 1937, p. 399.

to A.D. 1899.<sup>22)</sup> Though Schweitzer is an arch-Modernist himself, Harnack's removal from his construction of Christ's vital message of everything that might be offensive to the thinking or the taste of sophisticated modern man aroused his dissension. Thus in this work Harnack stands before us as the exponent of Modernism *par excellence*, the prophet of easygoing liberal optimism, which basks in the sunshine of its own culture, solves neatly to its own satisfaction the problems of the universe, and has nothing but a shrug of the shoulders for such mysteries as still remain.

## VI

To characterize Harnack's theological position further, it should be said that he definitely rejected the view which was quite popular in theological circles around 1900, that to obtain a correct understanding of religion one has to study one's own religious consciousness. He continued to insist that history, especially the history of Christ and of the Church, had to teach what true religion is.<sup>23)</sup> With equal definiteness he opposed the views of the school stressing the history of religion (*Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*), which endeavored to trace Christianity back to old heathen myths—an opposition which made some people say that Harnack had ceased to be a liberal.<sup>24)</sup>

## VII

While exhibiting an almost incredible activity in his chosen field, Harnack at the same time developed a deep interest in social work. He was responsive to everything he observed in the world about him. When in 1890 the Evangelical-Social Congress was formed in Germany, he rejoiced and became a member. In 1902 he was even made president of the organization—a position which he occupied till 1911.<sup>25)</sup> It is difficult to decide whether Harnack's activities in this field went beyond the sphere in which a theological professor may legitimately move. He seems to have been quite prominent in the debates on social questions that agitated Germany in the first decade of the century. Under his leadership the Evangelical-Social Congress condemned the refusal of mine owners in the Ruhr to submit their difficulties with employees to arbitration.<sup>26)</sup> On the other hand, he advocated the view that large possessions should serve the public good and was an ardent supporter of the inheritance tax principle.<sup>27)</sup>

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22) *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, II, p. 246.

23) Agnes von Zahn-Harnack, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

24) *Ibid.*, p. 297.

25) *Ibid.*, pp. 215 ff.; 371 ff.

26) *Ibid.*, p. 373.

27) *Ibid.*, p. 373.

**VIII**

When after the war the dialectical theology under the leadership of Barth, Brunner, Thurneysen, and Gogarten came to the fore, Harnack felt that a movement had begun whose language he did not understand. A new terminology was employed, strange ideas were presented, everything was foreign to a man like him. In 1920 when he heard Barth speak, his reaction was that the lecture contained not one sentence, not even one thought, in which he could join.<sup>28)</sup>

In 1929 he wrote in a letter, "I never could have thought that a speculation might still arise among us for which I possess no antennae."<sup>29)</sup> Here one can sympathize with Harnack. Who of us has not felt that he was suddenly transported into a pathless wilderness abounding in grotesque, almost frightening rock formations when he began reading Barth's writings? But it was no longer Harnack, the brilliant historical scholar and man of the world, but the dialectical school which dominated the stage when he died.

In conclusion, if somebody had said to Harnack that he was a rationalist, he would, one imagines, have denied that the charge was justified and would have declared that he was not a rationalist but a historian. But one can easily see that Harnack did not write objective history, but permitted his judgments and evaluations to be colored by certain canons and considerations which had been suggested by human reason, such as: Miracles do not happen, Jesus was merely a man, everything miraculous must be eliminated from the Christian religion, the Bible is a human production. An appropriate closing sentence is the word of St. Paul, 1 Cor. 1:23, 24: "We preach Christ Crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

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W. ARNDT

**Circumcision and Baptism**

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The Bible does not speak very frequently on the meaning or the purpose of Holy Baptism and less frequently on the meaning and the purpose of Circumcision, and still less on the mutual relation of the two sacraments or on a comparison of Circumcision with Baptism. What little the Bible has to say on the points could be quoted in very short time. (Col. 2:17; Heb. 10:1.)

But the question assigned for this paper seems to ask for more than just the quoting of those few Bible passages; for this is to

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28) *Ibid.*, p. 532.

29) *Ibid.*, p. 534.

be a conference paper. We as a conference of Lutheran theologians want to safeguard ourselves at the very outset against the suspicion of wasting time on "trifling questions" ("unnuetze Fragen"); we want it clearly understood that we do not mean to carry our theology any farther than those things for which we have Scriptural warrant.

Our whole answer to the question as to the mutual relation of Circumcision and Baptism may be summed up in the short sentence: Circumcision and Baptism are, respectively, an Old Testament and a New Testament sacrament. They are alike in being both sacraments; they differ in belonging, the one to the Old Covenant, the other to the New Revelation.

But this does require a little further elaboration; we shall speak of the word *sacrament*, of the various definitions of this term, of the points of similarity of Circumcision and Baptism, of their points of difference, of the main difference, and finally we shall have a few quotations of opinions of theologians who have gone into this matter in great detail.

The word *sacrament* has not by any means always had the same meaning; nor do all people that use the word at present take it in the same sense. With the ancient Romans *sacramentum* meant a soldier's oath of allegiance, his vow of faithfulness; or it meant the sum of money deposited by two men entering upon a court case; in general, it signified that by means of which a person obligates himself; later, it meant any vow or oath. *Sacramentum* is derived from the verb *sacrare*, to render sacred. Notice the close connection between the words *sacrament* and *sacrifice*, both sacred acts.

Since the word *sacrament* does not occur in the Bible, we cannot insist on one particular meaning as the only correct one; the best we can do is to follow the various changes of meaning through the centuries. And if in our own time other communions have established a usage differing from our own, we cannot dispute their use of the word as unbiblical, but must be content to define what we mean when we use the word. The Reformed use differs from the Lutheran, and the Roman Catholic from both.

As to the number of the sacraments—for this has a distinct bearing on the meaning of the word—there have been counted, in different times, in different communities, and in different respects, two, three, four, seven, and more than seven. Among Roman Catholic theologians the number varied until the twelfth century, when the sacred number seven came into general acceptance, which was definitely fixed at the Council of Florence in 1439. A certain Jesuit writer (Scherer) proves that the number of sacraments must be seven, "because no man so far has cursed by fewer than seven sacraments." And the Roman Catholic Church to this day

curses everyone who teaches that there are fewer than seven sacraments. According to the definition commonly accepted among us, there are, of sacraments at present in force, only two, namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

By a loose definition the word *sacrament* may mean any sacred act, less loosely, one ordained by God. Many of the Reformed churches have the same number of sacraments as we, but an erroneous definition when they describe a sacrament as "an outward ceremony of the Church, ordained as a visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace; specifically, a holy rite regarded as a sign of the union of the soul with God." (Winston.) We fully subscribe to the fine definition of our Synodical Catechism: "Question 269. What do we mean by a Sacrament? Answer: A sacred act, ordained by God, wherein He by certain external means, connected with His Word, offers, conveys, and seals unto men the grace which Christ has merited." According to this definition there are only three things belonging to a sacrament: The command of God, a visible sign, and the promise of grace. Where any of these three is missing, there is no true sacrament.

Some dogmatists have insisted on a four-point definition, adding to the three points named also a "heavenly treasure" ("das himmlische Gut"), the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, and the Holy Trinity in Baptism. But that becomes untenable when you consider that there is no "heavenly treasure" common to all sacraments and that even in the two New Testament sacraments this heavenly treasure is not present in the same sense.

In the above Lutheran definition of our Synodical Catechism, showing what all sacraments have in common, we have already indicated in what points Circumcision and Baptism are alike. Circumcision and Baptism are parallel in these points that both are sacred acts ordained by God, both have to do with some external element, and both have the promise of God's grace. Compare Dr. Arndt's *Fundamental Christian Beliefs*, page 51: "In our Lutheran Church a sacrament is defined as a religious rite which is instituted by God Himself and includes the use of some definitely prescribed outward means and confers the forgiveness of sins." Another current definition of the word *Sacrament* is "the visible word"; that might seem to imply that some word of God must have been used in the administration of Circumcision. While this has been assumed, as the following quotation from Edersheim will show, still there does not seem to be any conclusive proof. Even so the definition might be accepted as applying to Circumcision in this sense that the very act of Circumcision performed before the eyes of people who were well acquainted with the command and the promise of God concerning Circumcision would bring to

their minds very vividly such words of God. In their hearts the external act would be "connected with God's Word." Edersheim says, speaking of the circumcision of the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth: "We can scarcely be mistaken in supposing that then, as now, a benediction was spoken before circumcision, and that the ceremony closed with the usual grace over the cup of wine, when the child received his name in a prayer that probably did not much differ from this at present in use: 'Our God and the God of our fathers, raise up this child to his father and mother, and let his name be called in Israel Zacharias, the son of Zacharias. Let his father rejoice in the issue of his loins and his mother in the fruit of her womb, as it is written in Prov. xxiii. 25, and as it is said in Ezek. xvi. 6, and again in Ps. cv. 8, and Gen. xxi. 4; the passages being, of course, quoted in full. The prayer closed with the hope that the child might grow up, and successfully 'attain to the Torah, the marriage-baldachino, and good works.'"<sup>1)</sup>

Baptism and Circumcision are alike in the three vital points of our definition of a sacrament; we do not need to give proof for that with regard to Baptism; let us then proceed to find the Scripture references on these three points with regard to Circumcision.

The rite of Circumcision was a sacred act ordained by God. In Genesis 17:10 we read (God speaking to Abraham): "This is My covenant, which ye shall keep, between Me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt Me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations." Circumcision was instituted by God; the action commanded is the surgical removal of the foreskin; the promise of God's grace lies in the words: "It shall be a token of the covenant betwixt Me and you"; and that covenant includes the full measure of God's grace for time and for eternity. This promise of God's grace is stated a little more fully in verse 7: "And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee." Truly, a gracious promise; and also a promise of God's full grace to all those receiving Circumcision.

And the meaning? Circumcision was meant not only as an indelible marking of all those who belonged to God's people, but obviously it is a sign of the necessity of purification for all who wish to be counted among God's people. God had already told

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1) Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. Vol I, pp. 157 f.

Abraham: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed"; and the covenant was to be an everlasting covenant, hence not only earthly, temporal blessings were intended, but spiritual; the coming Savior was to be born of Abraham's children's children through natural generation, or procreation, so far as the line of His ancestors was concerned; not only that, but also personal faith in Him required purification, emphatically indicated in Circumcision. Fairbairn says: "It is to be held, then, as certain in regard to the sign of the covenant, as in regard to the covenant itself, that its more special and marked connection with individuals was only for the sake of more effectually helping forward its general objects. And not less firmly is it to be held that the outwardness in the rite was for the sake of the inward and spiritual truths it symbolized. It was appointed as the distinctive badge of the covenant, because it was peculiarly fitted for symbolically expressing the spiritual character and design of the covenant. It marked the condition of everyone who received it, as having to do both with higher powers and higher objects than those of corrupt nature, as the condition of one brought into the blessed fellowship of God and therefore called to walk before Him and be perfect. There would be no difficulty in perceiving this nor any material difference of opinion on the subject if people would but look beneath the surface and in the true spirit of the ancient religion would contemplate the outward as an image of the inward. The general purport of the covenant was that from Abraham, as an individual, there was to be generated a seed of blessing, in which all real blessing was to center and from which it was to flow to the ends of the earth. There could not, therefore, be a more appropriate sign of the covenant than such a rite as Circumcision—so directly connected with the generation of offspring and so distinctly marking the necessary purification of nature—the removal of the filth of the flesh—that the offspring might be such as really to constitute a seed of blessing. It is through ordinary generation that the corruption incident on the Fall is propagated; and hence, under the Law, which contained a regular system of symbolical teaching, there were so many occasions of defilement traced to this source and so many means of purification appointed for them. Now, therefore, when God was establishing a covenant, the great object of which was to reverse the propagation of evil, to secure for the world a blessed and blessed-making seed, He affixed to the covenant this symbolical rite—to show that the end was to be reached, not as the result of nature's ordinary productiveness, but of nature purged of its uncleanness—nature raised above itself, in league with the grace of God, and bearing on it the distinctive impress of His character

and working. It said to the circumcised man that he had Jehovah for his bridegroom, to whom he had become espoused, as it were, by blood (Ex. 4:25) and that he must no longer follow the unregulated will and impulse of nature, but live in accordance with the high relation he occupied and the sacred calling he had received.”<sup>2)</sup>

A few special questions with regard to Circumcision are: What about the practice of circumcision among nations other than the Jews, in cases in which plainly the custom could not have been copied from the Jews? “There is no need for going into the question whether this ordinance of circumcision was now for the first time introduced among men or whether it already existed as a practice to some extent and was simply adopted by God as a fit and significant token of His covenant. It is comparatively of little moment how such a question may be decided. The same principle may have been acted on here which undoubtedly had a place in the modeling of the Mosaic institutions and which shall be discussed and vindicated when we come to consider the influence exercised by the learning of Moses on his subsequent legislation—the principle, namely, of taking from the province of religion generally a symbolic sign or action that was capable, when associated with the true religion, of fitly expressing its higher truths and principles. The probability is that this principle was recognized and acted on here.”<sup>3)</sup>

“Circumcision has been practiced among classes of people and nations who cannot reasonably be supposed to have derived it from the family of Abraham—among the ancients, for example, by the Egyptian priesthood and among the moderns by native tribes in America and the islands of the Pacific. Its extensive prevalence and long continuance can only be accounted for on the ground that it has a foundation in the feelings of the natural conscience, which, like the distinctions into ‘clean’ and ‘unclean,’ or the payment of tithes, may have led to its employment before the times of Abraham and also fitted it afterwards for serving as a peculiar sign of God’s covenant with him. At the same time, as it was henceforth intended to be a distinctive badge of covenant relationship, it could not have been generally practiced in the region where the chosen family were called to live and act. From the purpose to which it was applied we may certainly infer that it formed at once an appropriate and an easily recognized distinction between the race of Abraham and the families and nations by whom they were more immediately surrounded.”<sup>4)</sup>

2) Fairbairn, *Typology of Scripture*. Vol. I, p. 271.

3) It must not be overlooked that Fairbairn presents the Reformed view and hence his use of the term *symbolical* cannot be sanctioned by us.

4) *Op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 269.

That the grace offered, conveyed, and sealed to the recipients of Circumcision was indeed no other grace and no less a grace than that conveyed in Baptism, that the two sacraments are alike in this point also can be proved not only positively, but also negatively. If any man among the Israelites did not choose to receive Circumcision, he was not subjected to some fine or minor punishment or any form of punitive correction, but we read Gen. 17:14: "And the uncircumcised man child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken My covenant." Circumcision made a person a member of the theocracy and a sharer in all the prerogatives and privileges which the physical Israel as the nation from which the Savior was to be born possessed.

The wealth of the promise of grace given in Circumcision is also attested in Rom. 4:11, where the Apostle Paul says of Abraham, "he received the sign of Circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith."

So much for the likenesses.

Now for the differences between Circumcision and Baptism. Both sacraments have indeed been instituted by God, but the former only for a stated time, to the coming of Christ, the latter to be used until the end of the world. When the former was abrogated and another instituted in its place, the former is marked as less good, the latter as better. Both sacraments had an earthly element. But that of the Old Testament was grievous, it had very prominent, unmistakable features of the heavy burden of the Law. Both sacraments did indeed proclaim God's grace, but the Old Testament sacrament only as a promise to be fulfilled in the future, whereas Baptism offers God's grace on the basis of Christ's work finished, accomplished, and completed.

The most important difference between the two sacraments undoubtedly is this, that Circumcision belonged to the Old Testament and Baptism belongs to the New Testament, with all that this distinction implies. What does it imply? As great a difference as there is between the image and the reality; as great as the difference between what we see in the mirror and ourselves, with body and soul. As the Passover Supper gave the meat of the lamb as a symbol of Christ (who was to come), whereas the Lord's Supper offers and gives the true body and blood of Christ, the Real Presence: so Circumcision emphatically showed the need for purification and pointed dimly forward to the Savior who was to accomplish that purification, but Baptism is the washing of regeneration, our sins have been washed away in our Baptism, as many as have been baptized have put on Christ. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us . . . and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for He is faithful that promised." Heb. 10:19 ff.

In connection with the discussion on the differences, we may add a little on the relation of these two sacraments. I shall again quote from Fairbairn's classic *Typology of the Old Testament*: "The bearing of all this on the ordinance of Christian Baptism cannot be overlooked, but it may still be mistaken. The relation between Circumcision and Baptism is not properly that of type and antitype; the one is a symbolical ordinance as well as the other.<sup>5)</sup> And both alike have an outward form and an inward reality. It is precisely in such ordinances that the Old and the New Dispensations approach nearest to each other and, we might almost say, stand formally upon the same level. The difference does not so much lie in the ordinances themselves as in the comparative amount of grace and truth respectively exhibited in them — necessarily less in the earlier and more in the later. The difference in external form was in each case conditioned by the circumstances of the time. In Circumcision it bore respect to the propagation of offspring, as it was through the production of a seed of blessing that the covenant, in its preparatory form, was to attain its realization. But when the seed in that respect had reached its culminating point in Christ and the objects of the covenant were no longer dependent on the natural propagation of seed, but were to be carried forward by spiritual means and influences used in connection with the faith of Christ, the external ordinance was fitly altered, so as to express simply a change of nature and state in the individual that received it."<sup>6)</sup>

I am indebted to a brother for another quotation elaborating the relation of Circumcision and Baptism. It is from Clandish in the *Homiletic Commentary*. "Abraham is circumcised on the eve of his becoming the father of the Messiah — when the Holy Seed is to spring from him; and all the faithful are to be circumcised till the Holy Seed come. Hence one reason why the introductory seal of the covenant is superseded and another sacrament has been ordained in its place. Circumcision significantly pointed to the future birth of Christ, who was to be of the seed of Abraham.

5) Fairbairn here, apparently, does not speak of the Reformed view, which we reject, that the significance of Baptism is merely symbolical, but of what Luther treats in the fourth point of the section on Baptism in the Small Catechism, What does such baptizing with water signify?  
— Ed.

6) Fairbairn, *Typology of the Old Testament*, p. 274.

The birth being accomplished, the propriety of Circumcision as a sacrament ceases. Any corresponding rite now must not be prospective, but retrospective; not looking forward to the beginning of the Messiah's work, as the righteousness of God, when in His birth He was shown to be His Holy One and His Son by His miraculous conception in the Virgin's womb — but looking back to the end of His work, in His burial, and He was declared to be the Son of God with power, by His resurrection from the dead.

"Such a rite, accordingly, is Baptism, as explained by the Apostle when he says: 'We are buried with Him,' etc. Rom. 6:4. Our Baptism signifies our engrafting into Christ, as not merely born, but buried and risen again. It refers not to His entrance into the world, but to His leaving it. It is the symbol, not of His pure and holy birth merely, but of the purifying and cleansing efficacy of His precious blood shed upon the cross and the power of His resurrection from the dead to His life and glory. . . . Both Circumcision and Baptism denote the purging of the conscience from the dead works or from the condemnation and corruption of the old nature through the real and living union of the believer with Christ — with Christ about to come into the flesh, in the one case; with Christ already come, in the other."<sup>7)</sup>

Finally, let me quote to you two sections translated and copied from Chemnitz' *Examen Concilii Tridentini* and from the other renowned Lutheran theologian Gerhard in his *Loci Theologici*. And you will not find it hard to agree with me that we have much reason to be thankful for the clear, concise, and logical writings of our own Lutheran theologians as compared with those of the Reformed Church.

"In His Word God has at all times, from the beginning of the world, proclaimed His will concerning the redemption of mankind, concerning the reconciliation of grace, and concerning the reception of believers into eternal life through faith for the sake of the sacrifice of His Son, the Mediator. He also added to the Word certain divinely instituted external signs, by which He would seal and confirm the promise of justification by faith more clearly. Therefore the institution and the use of the sacraments did not begin in the time of the New Testament; but the fathers in Old Testament times, even before the giving of the Law, had certain signs or sacraments of their own, divinely instituted for this use, which were seals of the righteousness of faith. Rom. 4. Now, although God is the same, the Mediator is the same, grace, righteousness, the promise, faith, and salvation are the same, nevertheless those external signs or seals were at one time changed,

7) Clandish, *Homiletic Commentary*: Genesis, p. 358. The reader must bear in mind that Clandish, too, is a Reformed theologian.

others having been substituted for them by divine institution, as from time to time the manner of proclamation was made clearer; which was at first like a lamp burning in a dark place; afterward the Morning Star followed, until finally, when night had passed, the Sun of Righteousness rose. Thus there followed upon the patriarch's signs the rite of circumcision, and only when Circumcision was abrogated, did the sacraments of the New Testament follow through the institution of the Son of God. Now, because that change in signs has been attacked by the objections of heretics, especially of the Manichaeans, people began, not uselessly, to inquire and to dispute concerning the agreement and similarity of, and concerning the difference between, the sacraments of the Old and the New Testament. And the matter in itself is clear, just as the bases are handed down in Scripture. But the name *sacrament*, which is used, sometimes in a wide sense, sometimes in a narrow sense, makes that doctrine confused to some extent. Afterwards the disputations of the scholastics *de opere operato* completely confused and destroyed that doctrine. And these disputes gave to Luther the occasion, as in the book *De Captivitate Babylonica*, to begin a more diligent study from the Scriptural sources concerning the similarity and dissimilarity of the sacraments of the Old and the New Testament. Lest we should have to fight after the manner of the Andabatae (gladiators who fought in helmets having no openings for vision) in the dark, the status of this controversy shall be shown.

"These principles are clear and, I think, beyond controversy between our papal adversaries and us, namely, that to the righteous in Old Testament times grace, righteousness, salvation, and eternal life were offered, shown, given, and conferred by God for the sake of the coming sacrifice of His Son, the Mediator. For that the righteous in Old Testament times were saved is positive from the Scriptures. For nobody is saved without the grace of God. That is promised and given only for the sake of the blessed Seed. And also this is beyond dispute, that there is no other grace and also no other faith by which the just are saved in the Old Testament times than now in the New Testament times. For we have the same spirit of faith, 2 Cor. 5.

"That grace, also, by which Abraham was justified and by which David was saved is an example of justification and salvation of all times. Rom. 4. Therefore the question remains, in what way, that is, by what means, instrument, or organ, God offered, showed, gave, and conferred grace and salvation in Old Testament times. However, it is certain that those fathers had the word of promise concerning the blessing through the coming Seed.

"They also had certain external rites added and fastened to this promise of grace by divine institution.

"And I do not know definitely whether the papists would want to admit that even the word of promise was such a means or instrument in Old Testament times. The discussion at this place is concerned with the sacraments, to which that promise of grace has been fastened by divine institution. And at least among the old church writers this axiom concerning Circumcision, the sacrament of the Old Testament, was common and clear: that children in Old Testament times were freed from original sin through Circumcision. Also Beda quotes from the fathers this belief, which is not unknown to the scholastic writers: the sacraments of the Old Testament, observed at the proper time (*suo tempore custodita*) conferred eternal life. In Lombard's time this belief began to be called into question. And even Hugo, who lived about that time, disputes very obscurely and waveringly (as Gabriel tells) that the salvation of the just is the same in the Old and in the New Testament. Therefore it was meant by those words that the Old Testament sacraments justified indirectly and *ex consequenti*, as though through the mediation of the New Testament sacraments. The scholastics even attribute this opinion to Lombard that through the Old Testament sacraments God by no means conferred grace on believers, even when they used them in faith and love; because he held that they were prescribed only as a burden and a yoke, not for justification.

"By these disputationes of Hugo and Lombard a μῆλον ἔριδος (apple of discord) was thrown into the discussion; and this was eagerly and avidly seized upon by the mass of scholastics. And when the doctrine of the *opus operatum* was fabricated, they invented this distinction between the sacraments of each Testament, that through the former (Old Testament sacraments) grace was only signified, but not shown and conferred, even to those who received them in the proper way (rite); while through the latter (New Testament sacraments) grace is truly shown and conferred, even if there be no good interior motive in the recipient.

"But because some of them saw that it would be absurd to say that grace was not conferred on the just in the Old Testament, they fancied that the Old Testament sacraments conferred grace, not *ex opere operato*, but *ex opere operantis*, that is, through a kind of merit arising from the piety of the recipient, which they state thus: they say that every act of virtue produced by love (*charitate formata*) is meritorious; and the observance of the Old Testament sacraments, they say, is an act of obedience. For precepts were given concerning sacraments of this kind, and therefore they say their observance was a fulfillment of these precepts; and that, therefore, by reason of the virtue of obedience, as by a kind of merit, the faithful at that time received grace in the observance

of the sacraments. Now, this view directly and point-blank opposes Paul, who in Rom. 4 expressly teaches and affirms that Circumcision did not justify Abraham *ex opere operato*, or through a kind of merit; but that it was a seal or assurance of the righteousness of faith, which has this property that it is the blessedness of that man to whom as to one who believes, not one who works, God according to His grace imputes righteousness without works, Rom. 4.<sup>8)</sup>

The scholastics put away out of the sacrament both the promise, by which the grace of God is offered and given, and the faith, by which the promise is accepted. They take the sacrament out of the Sacrament, they substitute our work for God's work; they change good into merit, the promise into a commandment.

Gerhard quotes Bellarmine's six distinctions between the sacraments of the Old and the New Testaments and designates as the most important this one: that the Old Testament sacraments were types of the New Testament sacraments. Col. 2:16, 17. Heb. 10:1. Augustine: "The sacraments of the Old Testament foretold the coming Christ; while the New Testament sacraments proclaimed the Christ who has appeared; in the Old Testament sacraments there was promised truth, in those of the New Testament there is revealed truth; in the former there is a significance of promise, in the latter accomplished facts." In the Passover there was the type of the flesh and blood of Christ, in the Lord's Supper there is the real substance, as through the medium of the bread and wine the true body and the true blood of Christ are given. To this principal and primary difference between the sacraments there is added another of the external sacramental symbols, which is not the same in all sacraments, but peculiar to each, just as also the sacramental act is peculiar to each sacrament.

"Though we deny that, beyond these differences, there is a difference in the principal purpose of the sacraments, which is to offer, show, give, and seal grace, yet we grant that 'as the revelation in the New Testament is clearer, the light of faith greater, and the measure of grace more rich, so also through the New Testament sacraments the grace of Christ is bestowed more clearly, more plainly, more perfectly, and more richly; for now that the mystery of the Redemption has been accomplished, truth succeeds the types, the body follows upon the shadows.' (Chemnitz.)

The reasons for our position regarding the purpose of the Old Testament sacraments and our position that there is no difference in the principal purpose of the sacraments in the Old and the New Testaments: 1. The Gospel promise of grace applies equally to

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8) Chemnitz, *Examen. Pars Secunda. De Sacramentis. Sectio II. De Differentia Sacramentorum Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, p. 236 sq.

the Old as well as to the New Testament. And since sacraments are nothing more than visible words, external rites added to the promise of grace, signs in which the promise of grace is vested, how can this same power be denied the Old Testament sacraments, since also the medium of receiving the benefits of Christ on our part is the same in the Old as in the New Testament, namely, the Word and the sacraments? 2. To the divine institution of Circumcision there was added the promise of grace: Gen. 17:7. Circumcision, therefore, was a means by which grace was offered and given and sealed to the believers; for: a. Gen. 17:7 is a Gospel promise, and since the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, Rom. 1:16, therefore, the sacrament with such a promise could not be inefficacious; b. it is clear from many Scripture passages that forgiveness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life were bestowed on those who received this sacrament in faith (Lev. 26:12; Jer. 31:33, 34; Matt. 22:32; 2 Cor. 6:18); c. God Himself promises to enter an agreement with Abraham and his descendants, Gen. 17:10; so He, so to say, inscribed this agreement in Abraham's flesh; d. God calls this Circumcision in the flesh an eternal treaty, and since such a pact with God cannot be made by an unregenerate man, therefore Circumcision was an efficacious medium of regeneration and grace; e. if the despisers of Circumcision were to be cast out of the assembly of the Church, Gen. 17:14, then Circumcision must necessarily be the means by which the circumcised were taken into the assembly of the Church and into the number of heirs of eternal life; cf. Baptism, John 3:4; f. Deut. 30:6; children were to be circumcised, as that was the only way in which their hearts could be circumcised, hence circumcision must be a beneficial (*salutaris*) means by which the hearts are circumcised. (Etc., etc.; 14 reasons in all.)<sup>9)</sup>

"Each sacrament has a certain specific material and formal principle of its own through which it is what it is and is distinguished from all others, concerning which it can and also should always be judged from its own words of institution. For since each sacrament follows the nature of its own Testament: the Old Testament has only the shadow of future things, *i.e.*, figures and signs of Christ, who in His own time must be revealed as about to suffer and die; the New, however, is freed from such figures and shadows and offers Christ in person, now as having been manifested and having suffered and died for us, according to Col. 2:16, 17; Heb. 10:1, 2; hence the primary and principal difference between the sacraments consists in this, that the Old Tes-

9) Gerhard, *Loci Theologici*. Locus Decimus Octavus. *De Sacramentis*, pp. 175—208.

tament sacraments were prophecies of the coming Christ, but the New Testament sacraments are proclamations of the manifested Christ; *i. e.*, the former were figures and shadows, not the body itself and the express and living image, while the latter truly contain the very body and the complete image, no longer shadows and figures; just so the very substance of the sacraments was other than and different from those of the New Testament sacraments.

"From all these facts we gather that Old Testament sacraments differ from those of the New Testament not only materially, but also formally. The *materia* or *objectum* is the earthly and the heavenly element; the *forma* is the sacramental act. The earthly element in Circumcision is the foreskin; in the Passover it is the flesh and blood of the Passover lamb; in Baptism it is the water; in the Lord's Supper it is the bread and wine; that these are not all the same, but different, is perfectly evident. The heavenly element, that is, the God-Man Christ, in the Old Testament sacraments is pointed out and foreshadowed by means of sacramental types and figures as still to be manifested in the fullness of time; but in the New Testament sacraments He is proclaimed and given in person through the sacramental symbols as through the proclaiming media or organs. This is clear not only from the institution of each sacrament, but from the nature of the case also, since the Old Testament was a period of shadows, but in the New Testament the figures of the Old Testament reach their completion and fulfillment in the manifested Christ; hence there is no more space for them. And that argument is unchanged, namely: If Christ had wished to place in the Holy Supper only the image of His body and blood, He would by no means have abrogated the Passover lamb, namely, because the killing, preparing of the latter, and the shedding of its blood signified far more clearly, manifestly, and evidently Christ's passion and death and the shedding of His blood than bread and wine alone could. Furthermore, the *forma*, or sacramental act, is different in each sacrament. The *forma* of Circumcision is the removal of the foreskin according to the command of God; the *forma* of the Passover is the eating of the paschal lamb, chosen, slaughtered, and prepared according to certain rites and the painting of the blood on the lintel and door-posts. The *forma* of Baptism is the washing of a human being, that is, the sprinkling of water or immersion in water done in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; the *forma* of the Lord's Supper is the manducation of the body of Christ with the consecrated bread and the drinking of His blood with the consecrated wine. To these principal heads of differences there can be added certain other secondary ones, namely, that the Old Testament sac-

raments applied only to the Israelites, the New Testament sacraments, however, to the Church gathered from Jews and Gentiles; that the former were to last up to the advent and ministry of Christ, these to the end of the world, 1 Cor. 11:26, because these are greater in power, better in usefulness, and easier in performing. But these and similar distinctions are secondary and of smaller moment.”<sup>10)</sup>

And finally, if you do not object to an application of what we have heard to our own lives and official duties, I may add this: We have just seen how much clearer, brighter, richer, and more glorious are the sacraments of the New Testament. Do we realize for ourselves and do we bring home to our hearers all the wealth of God's grace that is entrusted to our weak hands in Holy Baptism and in the Holy Eucharist? Are we in danger of becoming professional, casual, or cold in our administration of Baptism to little children or of the Lord's Supper to our communicant members? If we could by God's grace catch a fresh realization of the unspeakably great love that has given us these mysteries of the House of God, should we not administer them with increased unction and fervor, should we not preach of them with a new and more winsome persuasiveness? Might we not act and speak more for the glory of God?

Hoffman, Ill.

F. R. ZUCKER

## Outlines on the Standard Gospels

### Maundy Thursday

John 13:1-15

The washing of the feet at the arrival from a journey was an Oriental custom observed for the relief and comfort of the guest, and was usually performed by a servant. Who would bend to this task now in that upper room in the seeming absence of the servant? For all behaved like envious lords, each waiting for the other to humble himself, and none yielding. Yet the feet were washed. Who was the servant? Jesus, in grace and mercy, makes the most of the situation. We behold

#### The Lord and Master in the Form of a Servant

1. *For our justification*      2. *For our sanctification*

##### 1

The Lord and Master is introduced to us again, vv. 1-3, and He identifies Himself, v. 13. See His majesty, v. 1a, 3; Phil. 2:6.

10) Gerhard, *Loci Theologici. Locus Decimus Nonus. De Circumcisione et Agno Paschali*, pp. 220—221.

See His tender, undying love, v. 1b. The disciples were as far below Him as He is above them, and none was more worthy than He. He is clean.

Here was an opportunity for each disciple to render honor and service to Him; but none volunteered. This particular opportunity of direct personal service never returned. It was lost. Soon those tired feet would be pierced and bleeding. Offended majesty, unrequited love! Yet they would acknowledge Him Lord and Master, v. 13. Inconsistency. Sin of omission against Jesus, sin of omission against one another.

Jesus in the form of a servant, v. 4, 5. Each action of His deliberate, slow, impressive, because conscious, premeditated, willing self-abasement. Phil. 2:7, 8.

Silence until v. 6. The ensuing dialogue (vv. 6-11) is evidence that Jesus was not only giving an example: He was fulfilling the Law by His active obedience, in perfect love to His fellow man and to His God. The Lord and Master was substituting for the sinners. The Prophet, giving a lesson, is the High Priest, redeeming the transgressors, working out their justification for the salvation of each, giving attention to the individual, and not socializing.

Peter becomes eager to receive and to accept his Lord's service, though he not yet understood (personal faith in, and submission to, the majestic Servant). Judas the Traitor, sullen and black at heart, opposes Christ's love (unbelief).

Peter knew hereafter. We know now. 2 Cor. 8:9; Matt. 5:17; Gal. 4:4, 5; 2 Cor. 5:18, 19; Rom. 3:19-22.

Christ has placed also His active obedience into His Holy Supper, which He instituted in the same night. Here, too, the Lord and Master serves us and grants to us the justification wrought by His service for our cleansing.

Jesus fills our greatest need, does He not? Or are we perfect in love? Is anyone so proud and conceited to deny the dire need of justification by the substitution of Christ? May we by faith always rejoice in Jesus and His righteousness, Phil. 3:7-9.

## 2

The majestic loving Lord further adds to His service a practical lesson, vv. 12-15. It pertains to the attitude of the heart toward the brother and to active service to him; from a new motive. Matt. 7:12. Jesus cites the old commandment and the old motive. Here He gives an example how to fulfill the new commandment, v. 34. New because fulfilled by Him for us, v. 1; new because the motive is new; new because the standard of perfection is higher.

In our confession and at the Lord's Table we solemnly promise improvement of life. This improvement consists in renewed love to God and the neighbor. It includes humility to God and sub-

mission to His Word and self-abasement over against the brother. This must be the attitude of our heart. Improvement includes renewed and greater service to God and to the brother according to the new commandment, though it may require menial labor, expenditure of time and funds, personal inconvenience.

Conclusion: 1 John 4:9-11. Hymn 150:5.

G. H. SMUKAL

### Good Friday

2 Cor. 5:21

All the words of human language cannot fitly describe the miracle of Calvary, which we commemorate today. Calvary is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies from Genesis to Malachi (illustrate). Calvary is the world's great Atonement Day, when that wonderful work took place of which Luther writes: "Who redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature," etc. Calvary is the great dividing point of the world: here, through their unbelief, many fall and are eternally lost; and here God's elect rise to eternal life. What does Calvary mean to you? Let us consider

#### Calvary's Amazing Divine Love

1. *Calvary's amazing redeeming love*
2. *Calvary's amazing sanctifying love*

##### 1

"For He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin." In these words our text depicts to us Calvary's amazing redeeming love. Simple words, indeed!! But oh, how profound is their meaning! Christ's death was not the death of a mere man. He did not die simply because He had attacked the rulers of Israel or because principles meant more to Him than persons. His was not a martyr's death, nor a reformer's death. God gave Him into death, John 3:16; Is. 53:10. Indeed, Christ gave Himself into death, John 10:11, 15, 17, 18. What amazing love! Rom. 5:8.

But why should Christ die? He knew no sin, John 8:46; Heb. 7:25, 26. He had no original sin, Luke 1:35; therefore also no actual sins. Dwell on Christ's sinless life, especially His faultless conduct during the *passio magna*, 1 Pet. 2:21-23. But that is not all. The sinless Christ who died on Calvary is God's Son, very God of very God, 2 Cor. 5:19; John 10:30. Marvel at Calvary's amazing divine love. Here the holy, righteous, sinless God dies. And why? God made Him to be sin for us, v. 21a. Bring home to the hearers this great truth, Is. 53:4-6; 10. Christ died on Calvary as the greatest sinner that ever lived, Is. 53:6. But why this sacrifice supreme? The Law had to be fulfilled; our spiritual enemies had to be defeated; our sins had to be atoned for; the demands of divine justice

had to be satisfied; righteousness had to be procured for us, Ps. 49:7, 8; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; 2:14, 15; 2 Tim. 1:10; 1 John 3:8.

Such is Christ's death on Calvary — a vicarious, substitutionary death. Of such amazing divine love no man-made religion knows; it is only the Bible that tells us of "love so amazing, so divine." — But equally amazing is

## 2

Calvary's amazing sanctifying love. — "That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." What do these words mean? 1. They accuse and condemn us: we have no righteousness of our own; we are sinners, lost and condemned under God's wrath and the curse of the Law, Gal. 3:10; Ps. 51:5; John 3:6; Gen. 8:21; Rom. 7:18; Eph. 2:3; Matt. 15:19; Jas. 4:17, etc. Preach the Law in all its severity. — 2. God demands of us perfect righteousness, Gal. 3:12; Luke 10:28; Deut. 27:26; Rom. 6:23. — 3. No man can by his own reason and strength supply that righteousness, Ps. 14:23; Eccl. 7:20; Is. 64:6; Job 14:4; Phil. 3:12; Ps. 143:2; Jas. 2:10. But, thank God, the Lord had mercy on us. — 4. "That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him," God has secured through the active and passive obedience of Christ perfect righteousness for the world (objective reconciliation), 2 Cor. 5:18, 19; Gal. 4:4, 5; 1 John 2:1, 2; Is. 53:4 ff. What amazing divine love!

But the words mean still more. Christ has not only procured righteousness for us, but in His mercy God applies that righteousness unto us, 2 Cor. 5:19, 20. The penitent thief. The centurion at the foot of the Cross. The story of the resurrection and Christ's gift of peace, John 20. Pentecost. Mark 16:16; Matt. 28:19, 20. How great is divine love! Christ, having died for His sheep, now gathers in His sheep, John 10:16. Illustrations supplied by Acts and the Church's mission work.

What does Calvary's amazing miracle of redemption and reclamation mean to you? Christ desires *your* salvation, John 3:16. He desires that you make known this salvation to others. Let His surpassing love move you to ardent love toward Him, praising Him for His wonderful love not only by word and holy conduct, but especially by telling the precious story of His saving love made manifest on Calvary.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

### Easter Sunday

Mark 16:1-8

Like heavy stones, fear, sorrow, and doubt are weighing upon many hearts this Easter Day. But there are none so heavy that the message of the risen Christ cannot roll them away. Every part of that message is replete with comfort, assurance, truth; also that part which reads:

**"The Stone Was Rolled Away"**

## 1

*By whom was this done?*

By the keepers? No, they were not allowed to break the official seal. By the chief priests? No, they were too desirous to keep Jesus entombed. By the women who "came to the sepulcher at the rising of the sun?" No, they were surprised to find it already rolled away. By whom? An angel—the same whom they saw seated on the right side of the opened tomb. Without asking permission of any man, he had broken the seal. As if it had been a pebble, he had easily rolled away the stone. Yet not by his own but by God's authority he had acted. For is he not called "the angel of the Lord"? (Matt. 28:2, 3.) Did he not descend "from heaven," the seat of God's majesty? was not "his countenance as lightning," etc., to show that he was commissioned by Him who dwells in eternal light? In short, was not his rolling away of the stone *an act of God?*

a. Indeed, this was God's declaration that Jesus was risen and was His only-begotten Son, the true Messiah and Redeemer. Rom. 1:4; 4:25.

b. This the enemies had virulently attacked. At His crucifixion they had mocked, Matt. 27:43. The stone of His sepulcher they sealed in the same spirit of mockery. But when God by His angel ripped the seal apart and rolled the stone away, was He not answering: Look, you scoffers! I have delivered this Jesus. I will honor Him. He is all that you deny and more. At the risk of your souls you mock Him. Luke 10:16; John 5:23.

c. What a mighty, solemn witness! Let all deniers of Christ take warning. If the keepers did shake and the priests secretly tremble when God rolled away the stone from Jesus' tomb, what will be the terror of all unbelievers when, on the Last Day, He rolls away the stones from their graves and calls them to judgment? To no avail then the cry "Mountains, hills, cover us!" Luke 23:30; John 3:36.

## 2

*For whom was this done?*

For Jesus, to let Him out of the tomb? No, before the stone was rolled away, He had gone forth—risen, glorified, empowered to pass through sealed rocks and locked doors. Not for Jesus, but for men, to tell disciples as well as enemies: The grave is empty; He is risen. Had the stone not been rolled away, who even of the noble women would have believed? They had come early to the sepulcher not only worried ("Who shall roll us away the stone?") but also troubled (Since Jesus is dead, what will become of the promise of salvation?). But when they saw the stone rolled away

and perceived that God by an angel had done this to say: "Be not affrighted; He is not here . . . is risen — your victorious Savior, Lord and King" (v. 6), sadness gave way to joy, doubt to faith. The stone was rolled away from their hearts.

a. Are some here burdened with a sorrowing sense of guilt, sighing: Who will roll away this stone from our conscience? See how God by rolling away the stone from Jesus' grave has declared Him to be your living Savior. Rom. 8:34.

b. Are some, because of war, laden with heavy fears, doubts, and worries, crying: Who will roll away these stones from our hearts? See how God by breaking the seal of the enemies has declared Jesus to be your divine Protector. Heb. 13:20; Eph. 1: 20-23.

c. Are some grieving at the recent death of loved ones and asking: Who will roll away the stones from our graves? Who will open them and grant eternal life? Look to the grave of Jesus! Has God rolled away the stone from His, it is a proof that He can and will roll the stones away from ours. 1 Thess. 4:14; 1 Cor. 15:20.

d. These stones God would have lifted from all hearts. Like the noble women, let us go quickly and tell. A. E. WAGNER

### Easter Monday

Luke 24:13-35

Sometimes it seems as if present world conditions make Easter joy impossible. Does Ps. 118:24 really still apply? Certainly!

#### The Risen Lord, Our Companion on Life's Journey

1. *Though invisible to us, He is still at our side*
2. *He speaks to us through the Word of Scripture*
3. *Through this Word He creates true Easter joy in our hearts*

### 1

Vv. 13-24. Joyless, hopeless, the two disciples on Easter Day are on their way home. Their faith had been in vain, their hopes a delusion, so they thought, even though the risen Savior was actually walking with them.

In these days of war and turmoil a thousand voices shout to our ears that Christianity has failed, that we must look for other solutions of the world's problems. Or we are told Lutheran isolationism has failed; unless we unite, we are lost! Or our sons and daughters, husband or wife, are by the force of circumstances separated from us, are sent to the front, are reported wounded,

missing, killed. Our trust in Christ's answering our prayers seems to be a hollow mockery. Satan tells us Job 2:9. Our flesh asks Ps. 73:13, 14.

Does that change the fact that Christ lives and is at our side? Just as Christ actually walked with the disciples on that Easter afternoon, though they did not recognize Him, so to this day invisibly, yet actually Matt. 28:20; Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1:13-18 are true. In order to realize this, let us listen to His Words as they are recorded in Holy Writ.

## 2

Vv. 25-27. In order to cheer these despondent disciples, the risen Savior begins to speak to them, v. 17; points out the folly of their unbelief and the necessity of His suffering and death, vv. 25-27.

The same risen Lord speaks to us in His Word. Against the charge that Christianity has failed, read His statements Is. 40:12-31; 59:1, 2; Rev. 4 and 5; etc.; against unionism Jer. 23:16-29; John 8:31, 32; etc.; against sorrows and heartaches Is. 42:16; 46:4; John 14 and 17; Rev. 21 and 22. Particularly in these troubled days let us hear the Word of our risen Savior, Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16.

## 3

Words! Words! Words! How can words comfort and console and strengthen in these dreadful days? These are not words of mere man. Here speaks the risen Savior, the Everlasting God, Heb. 1:2, 3; Rom. 1:3, 4; John 6:62b.

The disciples experienced the power of Jesus' Word, vv. 31-35. Conditions round about them were unchanged. The same Satan, the same world, the same flesh harassed them. But a change had been wrought in them by the Word of the risen Savior, v. 32. Christ had been formed in them, Gal. 4:19, lived in them, Gal. 2:20, transforming their whole being and attitude.

With His Word the risen Christ Himself will enter your heart and will prove Himself the God of Comfort and Strength, so that you also will experience the truth of Paul's words 2 Cor. 1:3-5; Rom. 5:1-11. True Easter joy will enter your heart. You can go on your way rejoicing, Acts 8:39. This Word accepted in faith will keep you steadfast and loyal (1 Cor. 15:58) because of the indisputable fact of Christ's resurrection, 1 Cor. 15:12-57.

THEO. LAETSCH

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### Quasimodogeniti

John 20:19-31

On the first Easter, when the disciples were all together, suddenly the Savior appeared in their midst for the first time. Some had already spoken to Him. What would He say? Some had run

away. Some still doubted. Would He say, "Be loyal" or "Be strong" or "Be victorious" or "Be good"? None of those. He said, "Peace be unto you." That was the purpose of His incarnation, mission, redemption, resurrection—to bring peace. Peace that night meant the forgiveness of sins.

### The Most Precious Gift of the Risen Savior—the Forgiveness of Sins

1. Jesus proved that His gift of forgiveness was sure
2. He asked that His own should share it with others

#### 1

A. Jesus spoke of His great gift as "peace." That meant peace with the Father. 2 Cor. 5:18 ff.; Col. 1:20 ff.—He proved that this peace was genuine through His rising from the dead.—1. The thing that actually gained peace between God and man was Christ's redemption. Gal. 4:5. His suffering and death completed it.—2. But the resurrection demonstrated that the redemption was complete. Christ proved that He was no fraud; text, vv. 20, 27; and thus He showed that the ransom of mankind was fully paid.

B. But the Holy Ghost is Jesus' gift, too. The Savior did not leave His disciples with mere carnal proofs.—1. They had their place in preparing the work of faith. Text, vv. 30, 31. Thomas, v. 29. Every Christian is glad that the resurrection of Christ is historically uncontested.—2. But the Savior gave the disciples the Holy Spirit. V. 22; chap. 14:17; 15:26; 1 John 4:12 ff.; 5:9-12. That Spirit is ours through the working of Gospel and Sacrament. The Holy Spirit gives us the faith that Jesus is risen, that Jesus is our Savior, that our sins are forgiven, our debt before God canceled, our eternal peace secure.

#### 2

A. The Savior now asks His own to share this forgiveness and peace with others.—1. God-given faith works true love to our fellow men. Cf. 1 John 4:15-21. That means that they cannot rest. They want their fellow men to have their peace and joy.—2. But the Savior specifically "sends" His disciples with this gift of forgiveness out into their world. They are to bring God's forgiveness to others.

B. This gift of forgiveness the disciples bring in several ways.—1. They proclaim the message of peace, the story of accomplished salvation. Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; John 17:20. That message works the faith which makes man partaker of the redemption, brings him the forgiveness of sins, Luke 24:47.—2. But they also

pronounce the forgiveness which Christ has brought to the individual believer, through absolution and the distribution of the Sacraments. Text, vv. 22, 23. Cp. Acts 2:38; Matt. 26:28; 2 Cor. 2:10.—3. This implies the Christian's urging that the individual accept the redemption in faith, pleading with him to accept it lest he be lost. 2 Cor. 5:20; Ezek. 3:18 ff.; Text, v. 23. Not a warning that gloats, but a pleading that wins to God's own forgiveness in Christ Jesus!

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

### Misericordias Domini

John 10:11—16

False teachers, unfaithful shepherds, have ever been a problem in the Church, both as to doctrine and as to life. It was thus in the Old Testament; cp., e. g., Deut. 18:20, 22; Is. 9:15; Jer. 28:1 ff. It was thus in the days of Jesus and the true Apostles; cp. Matt. 7:15; John 9:22, 34, 38; 10:1, 8; Acts 15:24; 20:29; 2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 2:1, 2. Over against the many false teachers and seducers of men we have in our text the beautiful description of

### Christ the Good Shepherd

1. *By differing from all hirelings in giving His life for His sheep*
2. *By knowing His sheep and exercising loving care over them*
3. *By calling also other sheep into His fold*

### 1

Vv. 11-13. After announcing His theme and stating the proof for His love of the sheep the Lord, by way of contrast, at once characterizes the teachers and leaders who are the very opposite of Himself. The hireling has no personal interest in the sheep; he is not the owner; he is not concerned about their welfare. When he sees the wolf coming, he does not attempt to drive him away, but seeks his own safety in cowardly flight. The result is that the wolf can catch and scatter the sheep with impunity.—The hirelings of the flock today are such pastors and leaders as occupy their position only for the sake of personal gain. So long as no danger threatens, such persons may do their work of shepherding after a fashion, chiefly in such a manner as to avoid unpleasant references to prevailing sins in false doctrine and sinful life. But when days of testing come, when false doctrines threaten to enter the flock, or when the wickedness of the children of this world finds access, then such leaders desert their flock, mainly by refusing to raise their voices in warning or to take a definite stand against

the enemies. And so the archenemy of mankind has the best opportunity to enter the flock and to work havoc.

Over against such cowardice and flight under fire we have the example of the one Good Shepherd. For He is the one of whom even the Old Testament prophesied, Is. 40:3; Ezek. 34:23; cp. Ps. 23. He it is who at all times has given His sheep the care which they must have for all vicissitudes of life. Ezek. 34:15, 16. And the culmination of His shepherd's love was shown in the fact that He gave His life for, in the stead of, His sheep. The vicarious atonement is the very center of the preaching of objective justification. What a wonderful proof of the fact that He is indeed *the Good Shepherd!*

## 2

Vv. 14, 15. The theme is restated by the Lord. He describes the spiritual relationship and fellowship which obtains between Him and the believers, His sheep. This fellowship is as intimate and beautiful as that which exists between the Father and the Son. The Father knows the Son as His only-begotten Son, in whom He is well pleased, who was His ambassador to the sin-stricken world. And the Son knew the Father as having been begotten from the essence of the Father from eternity, as being one with Him. This fellowship is especially evident in the planning and executing of the work of salvation.

Thus the Good Shepherd knows His sheep with the divine wisdom which knows what is in man and yet embraces fallen mankind with a love transcending human understanding, a love which culminated in His laying down His life for His sheep. Is. 53. And therefore the loving knowledge which He shows toward the believers finds its response in the fact that they know their Savior by faith, realizing more and more that He alone is their Good Shepherd.

## 3

V. 16. The last proof for the fact that Christ is the Good Shepherd is of particular importance to those who are not members of the Old Testament covenant people. In His own personal ministry Christ was indeed not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Matt. 15:24, and He had previously instructed His disciples to confine their early work to these same people, Matt. 10:5. It was God's good pleasure to give His covenant people another, a special opportunity to accept their Savior.

At the same time He was fully aware of the fact (and He gave abundant proof of its power in His ministry by His occasional contacts with people who were not members of the Jewish nation) that He was the salvation of the Lord unto the ends of the world.

People all over the world who were not children of Abraham after the flesh, were, according to the Lord's prophecy, to hear His voice. And He would thus bring the believers from all nations of the earth together in the communion of the saints, truly the Good Shepherd of all.

P. E. KRETZMANN

### Jubilate

John 16:16—23a

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," Ps. 30: 5. That is the Christian "Order of the Day." It has been said that the customary way of counting the hours of the day is of heathen origin and reflects a heathen view of life: The day begins and ends at midnight—in darkness. In Genesis, and afterwards among the Jews, the day begins in the last rays of the sun; then the night; but thereafter to the very end the glorious day. That is the Christian life.—In this text the Lord Himself gives us

#### A Forecast of the Christian Life

##### 1

First of all, the Lord speaks of the Apostles' life. It was the night before His crucifixion. He tells them, v. 16. In the light of sacred history we understand the words "I go to the Father" comprised all His suffering, His death, resurrection, and ascension; hence, literally, the disciples for a little while did not see Him, then again they saw Him. They did not understand, vv. 17, 18. Hence Jesus repeats, v. 19, and adds, v. 20. Three times the same words, and then a double affirmative; evidently an important matter.

The Lord's purpose is to prepare them for what is coming. They were still living in the sunshine of their first conviction; the Bridegroom was still with them. But the night was coming; not only the next few days but throughout their life, v. 20. How often, when dangers threatened and the future looked hopeless, they thought of the Lord's words, Luke 17:22. The world celebrated Jubilate.

But after Good Friday came Easter—forty days of joy. And though He then again withdrew, the bond that united them with Him could not again be severed, Rom. 8:35—39. The day had dawned for them; and while there still came moments of darkness, in the end came the eternal light; evening and morning were past, and it was day.

##### 2

Vv. 22, 23a show that the Lord is not only speaking to the disciples who heard Him but to all His followers. He forecasts the entire history of the Church on earth. And v. 20 shows that the

Lord here refers not to the common adversities of life, which Christians as well as others must bear, but to those afflictions which cause the world to rejoice: persecutions of every form and degree waged against Christians because of their faith and convictions.

The early Church passed through such a night of affliction, but in the end every Julian Apostate had to concede the victory to the Galilean. In the Middle Ages, the night of Antichrist's rule in the Church, the faithful, almost despairing, pleaded: Ps. 12:1. But there came the tidings "out of the east" and "out of the north," Dan. 11:44, the angel with the everlasting Gospel, Rev. 14:6, 7; and the Wicked was revealed and consumed with the spirit of God's mouth, 2 Thess. 2:8.

Two centuries later, Europe and America were overwhelmed with a flood of deism, materialism, and rationalism. Voltaire said: "I am going through the forests of your Christian doctrines, and I will girdle every tree, so that presently not a sapling will be left to you." Thomas Paine brought the manuscript of his *Age of Reason* to Benjamin Franklin, who said: "Do not unloose that tiger; if our people are what they are with the Bible, what will they be without it?" In 1800 Yale had only three professing Christians enrolled. But in due time God sent a new awakening.

Within the memory of many of us a new attack began, now from within the visible Church; the termites are boring in the walls, the moles undermining the foundations (higher criticism, modernism, unionism, etc.). But we have the Lord's promise, Matt. 16:18; and we have the testimony of history that always, after the darkness, came the day of victory and new success.

### 3

The text finds application to every individual Christian. Your life begins in the sunshine of God's love (baptism; childhood in a Christian home; confirmation). But night follows, more or less dark (contempt, scorn, opposition, persecution of the world; not the least of these the fact that the world rejoices because they can make the Christian weep and lament). There come times in every Christian's life when he longs for one, just one of the days of the Son of Man, of His almighty help; and his greatest sorrow is that he cannot see it; it seems as though the Lord does not hear nor heed. (If that is not your experience, better examine your life!)

The Lord offers consolation to each one of His friends. It is only "a little while" and relief will come; that is the Lord's promise, v. 20b; 1 Cor. 10:13; that is the experience of all the children of God (Joseph, David, Job, Luther). It is only "a little while" and the night will end and the day will dawn, v. 22; 2 Cor. 4:17; evening and morning will lead into day—the last, the eternal day; and you will celebrate the never-ending Jubilate.      THEO. HOYER

**Cantate****John 16:5—15**

There are truths in the Bible which even many unbelievers accept, *e.g.*, that there is a God, that shameful sins should be punished, etc. But the Bible also contains statements which are especially repugnant and distasteful to the world. We have such a truth in our text. Here Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit condemns unbelief as the great, aye, the chief and worst sin of the world.

**Why Does Jesus Single Out Unbelief as the Great Sin  
Which the Holy Spirit Condemns?****1**

Because unbelief is the fountain from which all other sins pour forth. It is the source of all corruption, wickedness, and transgression. The world does not admit this. It is a common saying among the worldly "It makes no difference what a man believes as long as he is sincere and lives up to what he believes." But by this statement they contradict God Himself. Indeed, the dark history of sin refutes their folly.

Go back to the first sin committed by Adam and Eve in Paradise. When they told Satan, "God has forbidden us to eat of this fruit," the devil told them, "Yea, hath God said?" He created doubt. And when the matter became doubtful and the offered bait seemed so desirable, Eve fell and took Adam with her. Again, of Cain and Abel we are told, Abel had faith, but Cain sacrificed without faith, Heb. 11:4. From this lack of faith there came forth jealousy, hatred, and finally murder itself.

The men of Babel undertook to build a tower because they did not believe in God's protection, forgiveness, and mercy. What brought Pharaoh to this terrible, tragic end? His unbelief. Unbelief was the cause of the sins of Esau, Nadab and Abihu, of Saul, of Ahab. Unbelief moved the Jews to commit that shameful and cruel crime of crucifying their own Messiah.

You may think of a hundred and one sins, some of them shameful, disgraceful, some of them ugly, hateful, deathly ruinous, but the source of all of them is unbelief. That is the reason unbelief is mentioned here especially. If we wish to be God's children, we must diligently use the Word, for "faith cometh by hearing," etc. Rom. 10:17.

**2**

Unbelief is so great a sin because it is so *inexcusable*.

Our courts deal more leniently with one who seems to have an excuse for his misdeed, *e.g.*, a man who steals to appease his hunger has been treated with great leniency. We shall not decide

such cases now. One thing, however, is certain: there is no excuse for not believing in Jesus. I have not the time to mention all evidence in favor of Jesus and His claims. Note this:

- a) The miracles which Jesus performed, of which His very enemies testified, "This man doeth many miracles," John 11:47; of which Nicodemus said, "We know that Thou art a Teacher," etc., John 3:2.
- b) Jesus' resurrection, foretold and fulfilled, 1 Cor. 15:4-8.
- c) The many prophecies of Jesus, e. g., concerning wars, concerning the Jews, concerning the growth of the Christian Church — all fulfilled.
- d) John 7:17.

Application: Do not allow people to tell you that because of their superior intelligence they cannot believe with childlike faith. Most of the people who say they cannot believe the simple truths of the Christian religion, believe all manner of the most ridiculous nonsense, e. g., evolution, reincarnation, transmigration of souls, etc.

### 3

Because it is utterly *ruinous*. "He that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16:16.

a) Why is this? All men are sinners, subject to God's wrath and lost. There is only one hope for the sinner, and that is in the redemption of Jesus Christ. This blessing is offered to us in God's Word, the Gospel, and the only means of taking hold of it and possessing it is faith, faith in Jesus Christ. If this faith is missing, the sinner is hopelessly lost.

b) Moreover, the Scripture expressly teaches us that through the Holy Spirit's work of creating faith in our heart, true godliness, true fear of God, true holiness of life begin, Gal. 3:2. Examples: Paul; Luther.

Application: Let us flee, therefore, from unbelief as from the most shameful and most ruinous pestilence. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit may create and sustain faith in us, and let us diligently use the means through which the Holy Spirit does this in us. "One thing is needful!" — "Let them hear Moses and the prophets!"

"Lord, increase our faith!"

MARTIN S. SOMMER



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## Theological Observer

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**Propositions Concerning Some Essentials for Lutheran Unity Submitted for Discussion at Intersynodical Conferences.**—It is the aim in the following paragraphs to mention the issues which we believe confront our dear Lutheran Church here in America at present and to indicate briefly where in our opinion all who wish to be conservative Lutherans should stand. The paragraphs are not intended to enumerate all subjects in controversy, but merely to draw attention to some great essentials.

1. The inspiration of the Holy Scriptures is apparently the most important issue today. While all Lutherans, as far as we know, are willing to say that the Scriptures are inspired, a number deny that this inspiration is plenary and implies full inerrancy of the Scriptures. We hold that every word of the Scriptures as they were originally written by the Prophets and Apostles is definitely inspired (Verbal Inspiration; however, not mechanical) and that, coming from God, they are free from all error. This we believe on account of the testimony of the Scriptures themselves: John 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 2:13.

2. Another issue is the subscription to the symbolical writings of the Lutheran Church. We are not aware that a *bona fide* subscription to the confessional writings, a subscription to them *because (quia)* they set forth correctly the teachings of the Word of God, and not merely *in as far as (quatenus)* they do so, is officially opposed anywhere in the Lutheran Church of our country today. We mention this issue because of its vital importance.

3. A third issue pertains to unity in doctrine. In some circles the opinion prevails that unity in doctrine need not to be striven for, that latitude should be permitted, that merely in fundamental matters unity in doctrine must be worked for. Against such a view we urge the sacredness of every teaching contained in the Scriptures and the duty of God's children to cling to everything He has taught them, Matt. 28:20; John 8:31, 32. The conservative Lutheran Church dare not write indifference in doctrine on its flag.

4. Another issue has to do with the question whether absolute uniformity in all doctrines, fundamental and non-fundamental, must be a condition of church fellowship. While full unanimity in all matters of doctrine, be they important or apparently unimportant, must be sought, and while not a single statement of the Bible can be to us a matter of indifference, we should not say that there can be no fellowship unless uniformity also in all non-fundamental doctrines has been attained. Non-fundamental doctrines (that is, doctrines such as those of the Anti-christ and the conversion of all Israel) may not be reduced to the level of open questions. If a position on non-fundamental doctrines militates against a clear text of the Scriptures, it cannot be sanctioned, whereas weakness and temporary inability to understand and agree on non-fundamental doctrines may be borne if no divisions and offenses are created and if the authority of the divine Word is fully accepted and recognized.

5. The fifth issue pertains to unionism. False teaching is a poison, and church fellowship with those who divide the Church through false doctrine must be avoided, Gal. 5:9; Rom. 16:17, 18.

6. The sixth issue is the lodge problem. It is quite generally recognized in the Lutheran Church of America that the anti-Christian lodge must be opposed by us, that membership in it must be shown to be sinful, and that our church practice must include disciplinary measures against those who refuse to listen to God's Word on this point. The method of combating the lodge must, of course, be evangelical and have the aim to win the sinner.

NOTE.—These propositions are submitted by the Missouri Synod Committee for Doctrinal Unity. We cherish the hope that similar committees in other Lutheran bodies will likewise favor a wide discussion of these matters. Conference secretaries belonging to the Missouri Synod are requested to be so kind as to send us reports on the meetings here visualized.

THE MISSOURI SYNOD COMMITTEE FOR DOCTRINAL UNITY

**The American Lutheran Conference Overture for Lutheran Unity.** In our issue for March, 1944, we reprinted an overture for Lutheran unity which was published in the *Lutheran Outlook* of January, 1944—an overture that emanated from the executive committee of the American Lutheran Conference and was adopted by the committee in its meeting held in Chicago, January 7, 1944.

No one can deny the importance of this document. It faces the problem of Lutheran union or unity and submits definite views concerning it. The first paragraph sounds a healthy note, "Our Lutheran Church is rightly jealous of the integrity of its doctrine and practice, rightly wary of indifferentism or latitudinarianism, no matter what emergencies may arise." The second paragraph is equally commendable. "Therefore our Lutheran Church has set up great historic standards for its doctrine and practice, and has always insisted upon genuine and wholehearted acceptance of these standards by all who would share its name and fellowship."

The third paragraph explains why in the course of time additional statements touching doctrines became necessary and were drawn up, "Since some important points of doctrine and practice which were not issues in the sixteenth century and therefore were not included in the confessional writings of that period have more recently become issues affecting inner unity, our Lutheran church bodies have rightly required and provided supplementary statements, or theses, on occasion in order to testify to their unity and to reassure one another thereby."

It is in the fourth paragraph, when the scene of present-day theological discussion is entered, that we encounter statements which we cannot endorse. The Minneapolis Theses, the Brief Statement, and the Pittsburgh Agreement are mentioned, and the claim is made that these documents "have made sufficiently clear the position of the three major groups within American Lutheranism." This statement, it seems to us, does not agree with the facts. Certainly the position of the U. L. C. A. has not been made sufficiently clear by its adoption of the Pittsburgh

Agreement. We disregard for the present the inadequate character of the document and its rejection by an important, influential minority group of the U. L. C. A. It is evident that the Pittsburgh Agreement does not tell us where the U. L. C. A. stands on the controversies that have agitated the Lutheran Church of America during the past hundred years or so. The document, of course, was not intended to offer pronouncements on these controversies; its scope is very limited. Whoever desires to know what the U. L. C. A. teaches, for instance, on the various questions pertaining to the "Last Things," questions which have been debated widely in the Lutheran Church of our country, will not in this document be given the information he seeks. Hence we are amazed to find the statement submitted here that the position of the three major groups within American Lutheranism has been made sufficiently clear by the three documents listed. The Missouri Synod has told the world where it stands through issuing its Brief Statement. Is it expecting too much of the U. L. C. A. that it should say whether or not in its view this Brief Statement represents the teaching of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions?

The position of the American Lutheran Conference is much different from that of the U. L. C. A. The Conference has adopted the Minneapolis Theses, in which a number of the teachings that were debated are dwelt on, though only very briefly. It was the brevity of the document which made us criticize it in 1927. (See THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, VII, p. 116 f.) The American Lutheran Conference, too, should tell us whether in its view the doctrinal positions which we advocate in the Brief Statement are right or wrong. Of the American Lutheran Conference bodies the American Lutheran Church has in a general way endorsed the Brief Statement, while the Norwegian Lutheran Free Church in its official organ *Folkebladet* (see issue of December 2, 1942) stated its opposition to four doctrines held by the Missouri Synod, those referring to unionism, inspiration, predestination, and separation of Church and State. But the American Lutheran Conference as such has not given a declaration on its attitude toward the Brief Statement. In a word, each one of the three documents in question has told us something about the doctrinal position of the body that adopted it, but the Pittsburgh Agreement is far from telling the world what precisely the U. L. C. A. teaches on the controverted points, and even the Minneapolis Theses, though possessing great merits, are inadequate when viewed in this light.

In saying this we do not wish to be understood as holding that the publication of the overture is without value. We believe it is a good thing that the executive committee of the American Lutheran Conference has issued this document. First and foremost, the Norwegian Lutheran Free Church, member of the American Lutheran Conference, will be reminded by this manifesto, in which its representatives join, that it is in the wrong camp or must drop its opposition to the Missouri Synod teaching on verbal inspiration, because the First Article of the Minneapolis Theses (embodied in this overture) dealing with the Scriptures, though not employing the term "verbal inspiration," teaches exactly what the members of the Missouri Synod hold relative to the

inspiration of our Sacred Volume. Furthermore, this publication is bound to stimulate interest in doctrinal discussions, which is always to be welcomed. Lutheran theologians should regard the appearance of this overture as a clarion call urging them to sit down together and to discuss the important doctrinal issues that are before the Church. If that is accomplished, the publication of this document may well be regarded as a momentous event.

A.

**Chaplains in the Army and Navy.**—A recent statement which appeared in the *Lutheran Companion* says that the Missouri Synod has 180 chaplains in the Army and 8 in the Navy. The United Lutheran Church has 181 chaplains in the Army and 70 in the Navy. The total number of Lutheran chaplains is 529 for the Army, 143 for the Navy. The statement declares, "It has been estimated that the total number of Lutheran men in the American armed forces is approximately 450,000. This means that there is one Lutheran pastor in service for every 669 Lutheran men. The Government's aim is to have at least one chaplain for every thousand men. It would appear, therefore, that so far as its own membership is concerned, the Lutheran Church is furnishing an ample quota of chaplains. However, when it is remembered that at least half of the men in the armed forces have no church connections and that the chaplain must minister to all of the men in his command, our Church is not providing more chaplains than are actually needed." The latter point is important and should not be lost sight of.

A.

**Regarding the Communion Cup.**—*The Living Church* (February 20, 1944), an organ of the Protestant Episcopal Church, contains a letter which might prove of interest to some of our readers. It says: "The following is a summary of an article entitled 'Survival of Bacteria on the Silver Communion Cup,'—William Burrows and Elizabeth S. Hemmens—Department of Bacteriology and Parasitology and the Walter G. Zoller Memorial Dental Clinic, University of Chicago, Vol. 73, No. 3, pp. 180—190, taken from the *Journal of Infectious Diseases*, dated November-December, 1943: 'Evidence is presented which indicates that bacteria swabbed on the polished surface of the silver chalice die off rapidly. Experiments on the transmission of test organisms from one person to another by common use of the chalice showed that approximately 0.001 per cent of the organisms are transferred even under the most favorable conditions; when conditions approximated those of actual use, no transmission could be detected. Only small numbers of bacteria from the normal mouth could be recovered from the chalice immediately after its use by four persons. It is concluded that in practice the silver communion cup is not an important vector of infectious disease.' Albert E. Russell, M. D., Governors Island, N. Y."—We pass on this information for what it is worth. To us it only confirms the findings of experiments previously made.

J. T. M.

**Concerning Evening Services.**—An editorial in the *Presbyterian* of November 18, 1943, is worthy of being reprinted.

"Revive, Revivify, the Evening Service. A capable consecrated pastor sends us word to this effect: For ten years past the evening service has dwindled. Last year it was omitted. This fall it was re-established,

but ran along with twenty to thirty attending. Then the pastor quietly resolved that by the grace of God and hard work he would make it count. He insisted on it. He encouraged it. He tried to make it attractive in the best sense of that word. Numbers promptly increased. The report shows: 70, 96, 101, 113, 131, 141, 146 on successive Sabbaths. It recalls an experience we had reading over the ushers' book at the Arch Street Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, during the pastorate of Dr. Macartney. We remember noting how the evening audiences steadily grew over a period of ten years at the rate of an average of one hundred each year. The last figure in the series was for a June Sabbath night of a certain year, and it was just over 1,000. Ten years before that date the number present was under 100. Every evening service established helps to start another."

A.

**A Priceless Boon for the Blind.**—The entire King James Version of the Bible has now been put into talking-book form (phonographic recordings) for the blind and especially the crippled blind who cannot read Braille and other systems with their finger tips.

The entire Bible in talking book consists of 169 double-faced records. It takes almost 85 hours to run it off from Genesis to the end of Revelation.

About eight readers took part in producing this "talking-book Bible," two of them clergymen and others well-known radio and theater readers and speakers.

These recordings, like the Bible in Braille, is sold to the blind at a very much less-than-cost price, namely, at twenty-five cents per record. The price of the Bible in Braille is twenty-five cents per volume (English), and there are twenty volumes to the entire Bible, five of which are the New Testament alone.

You people who can see can buy a fairly good Bible in a dime store for twenty-five cents, an entire Bible. But it costs the American Bible Society almost a hundred dollars to produce the entire Bible in Braille. The twenty-five cent per-volume price does not even cover the cost of the paper on which the Holy Words are written in Braille. So you see what a precious thing it is to have one's sight!

Excerpted and submitted by Frederick Graepp

**The Reformation and Liberalism.**—*The Calvin Forum* (February, 1944) is enraged at the loose and unjust way in which liberal radicals speak of deistic and atheistic revolutionists as Reformers. It says: "Take, for example, Fred G. Bratton's recent book *The Legacy of the Liberal Spirit*. It is a discussion of so-called 'liberal' thought throughout the centuries. The program of liberal thinking is linked to outstanding thinkers in various periods. Here is the line-up: Origen, Erasmus, Voltaire, Tom Paine, Theodore Parker, Charles Darwin, John Dewey. Rationalism, Deism, Unitarianism, and Naturalism are all forms of the progressive world spirit. At the hands of Professor Bratton, Darwin becomes a 'saint.' An interesting implication of this whole standpoint comes to an unexpected expression in the characterization which the author gives of Voltaire. In a striking phrase he says that Voltaire is 'the Reformation of France.' This is a fine illustration of the liberal

view of the Reformation. The Reformation is simply a revolt—the content does not matter. It is a revolt. Whether in the interest of a purer Gospel as over against the perversions of Roman Mediaevalism or in the interest of a bald individualism and rationalism, does not matter. Whoever believes in revolt against authority is hence a son of the Reformation and has caught its true spirit. The belief that the individual is the highest court of appeal and that he is subject to no authority outside himself in his thinking and life is held to be the essence of the spirit of the Reformation. It is futile to point out to such 'liberal' thinkers that this interpretation of the spirit of the Reformation would be repudiated by all who themselves were champions of that movement and helped to create it and bring it to development. Even latitudinarian and irenic Erasmus would not agree to this interpretation. The Reformation, however, championed the rights of the individual as over against the group in *submission to the Word of God*. Every Reformer knew himself to be *minister verbi divini*. The authority of the Word of God was to him absolute. The 'revolt' of the Reformation was a revolt *in submission to the authority of the Word of God* [italics in the original]. However greatly the various interpretations of Scripture might differ, not the individual's opinion, but the truth of the revealed Word of God was the standard and norm. No radicalism or rationalism or naturalism can claim to stand in the line of the spiritual tradition of the Protestant Reformation."—Even the frequently presented view of the Reformation as its being an appeal from the judgment of the Church to the right of private judgment, is historically incorrect. Luther, for example, in his Reformation did not appeal from the doctrine or judgment of the Church to his own private doctrine or judgment. His appeal was from the erroneous, antichristian doctrine of the Papacy to the true and Christian doctrine of Holy Scripture. Nor did he presume to interpret Scripture by his own reason or intelligence; but, in expounding Scripture, he applied the age-old maxim: *Scriptura Scripturam interpretatur*.

J. T. M.

**What Our Seminaries Desperately Need.**—*The Calvin Forum* (February, 1944), under this heading, publishes a most timely editorial, taking exception to an article in a "Reformed Church Weekly" which suggested the establishment of a "Chair of Rural Work" at the Christian seminaries of our country. Among other things, the article declared: "We believe that our young men desperately need special training for the rural ministry." What, however, this "special training for the rural ministry" amounts to is, according to the *Calvin Forum* editorial, that the country pastor dons overalls, works at threshing with his parishioners, gives farmers a course in refinancing their mortgages, makes a practical study of enriching the soil, acquaints the farmers with the available scientific means of improving the yield of certain crops, and makes them proud to improve the outward appearance of their farm-houses and barns. He also organizes clubs for this purpose among the youth and in an all-round way helps them become better farmers in the most literal sense of the word. The *Calvin Forum* asks: "We would like to ask in all seriousness what all this has to do with the task of

the minister of the Gospel?" and then, admitting that the Word of God indeed has the promise of the life that now is, says with very much authority and emphasis: "We submit that what our young men desperately need for both the city charge and the rural parish is a deeper grounding in the Word of God; a grasp of the great verities of the abiding and eternal Faith and the ability to impart these to their audience on the Lord's Day, a real, deep pastoral sense that sympathizes with the needs and occupations, the disappointments and the hopes, the cares and the anxieties of the sheep of their flock. What our pastors, both in the city and in the rural district, need desperately is to understand the needs of the soul, to impart a spiritual blessing to these souls in home visitation and personal contact, to lift up the Christ and the consolations of the Word of God for the hungry and suffering. We do not need ministers that are businessmen. We do not need ministers that are shop-workers. Neither do we need ministers that are farmers. But we sorely and desperately need ministers, pastors, shepherds of souls, healers of wounded hearts, spiritual guides to young and old, counselors of perplexed Christians. We need practical men, to be sure. The minister who lives aristocratically 'above' the level of his hungry sheep, who look up and are not fed—we do not desire him, and he is a good riddance. A minister must enter into the life of his people. He must sympathetically understand them in their daily toil. But that he must do in order to give them what they do not have and he can impart. They will in the long run respect him most if he breaks the bread of life to them—not when he becomes an expert in improving the soil and refinancing their mortgages." We are sure that every truly Christian minister will subscribe to this. Modernists with their attempts at a social gospel, doing the very things said above of the pastoral farmer adviser, have failed egregiously, while ministers who did conscientiously what they were called to do, pastoring the flocks entrusted to them and feeding them with the word of God, were both ardently loved and sincerely respected. This, of course, does not mean that there should be no social or economic contacts between the rural pastor and his country folk parishioners; but it does mean that the minister should do his special work, just as the farmer does his. The minister who conscientiously dedicates himself to the spiritual Gospel will not have any time left for the so-called social gospel.

J. T. M.

**Enthusiasm and Nonsense.**—Sometime ago there appeared a compilation of essays by various authors on Jesus, edited by Thomas S. Kepler and bearing the title "Contemporary Thinking About Jesus." A review of this book recently appeared in *The Living Church* (February 13, 1944), written by Rev. Joseph Fletcher. Editorially the *Living Church* remarks on this review, among other things: "It seems to us that the basic question at issue is not, 'What is Jesus like?' but: 'What are our sources of information about Jesus?' To the orthodox Protestant, the answer is: 'All we know about Jesus is what we read in the Bible.' To the liberal Protestant, the answer is the same, although a different attitude toward the Scriptures tends to produce a different Christology. The New Testament specialist, because of the nature of his work, is all

too likely to fall into the same thought channel, even though he be a Catholic. The Christian strongly concerned with the shape of the social order . . . is likely to be disappointed with the moral teaching of our Lord in the New Testament because its relevance to social order is remote. Jesus is unquestionably 'the enigma of the centuries.' Even if the exaggerated claim [?] of the orthodox Protestant to the inerrancy of the Scriptures were granted, the fact would remain that no person, human or divine, can be pressed between the leaves of a book. Our most immediate sources of information about Jesus are not the Scriptures, but the Blessed Sacrament, which carries Him into our heart, and the Church, which is His mystical body. As the footnote to the Fourth Gospel exclaims, 'The world itself could not contain the books that should be written' if we all sat down to tell of our own sojourning with Jesus." It is remarkable how much unscriptural teaching a writer can put into a few sentences in such a way that the reader is inclined to believe that what he says is actually true. Take the first statement: "No person, human or divine, can be pressed between the leaves of a book." To His opponents Jesus said: "Search the Scriptures . . . they testify of Me" (John 5:39). Jesus was glad to acknowledge that He "was pressed between the leaves of a book" (the Old Testament) and for that very reason demanded that this book should be studied as a living witness to His person and work. Just so all historical persons are pressed between the leaves of books. That is true of Adam and of John Quincy Adams, of Abraham and of Abraham Lincoln, of St. Paul and of John Paul Jones. Whatever we know of any historical person who lived in the past, we know because that person has been pressed between the leaves of books. For the editorial writer of the *Living Church* to say that no person can be pressed between the leaves of a book, is the sheerest nonsense. In addition, note how he does away with the Scriptures as the only source and standard of faith. He desires *Lebensraum* for his rationalistic enthusiasm, his Calvinistic figment of the immediacy of the Holy Spirit's operation in man. He wants the Blessed Sacrament to carry Jesus into the heart in order that He there may give information concerning Himself. What he means to say is, if we were to tell, what we ourselves, in our own hearts, apart from Scripture, think of Jesus. The enthusiast who rejects Scripture as the only source and rule of faith ultimately makes his own mind the source of information about Jesus.

**Learning from the Cults.**—*The Christian Century*, in recent issues, offered a series of articles showing the amazing growth of certain "cults" in our country since 1926. In an additional article, under the heading given above, the same periodical places before its readers the question what other denominations might learn from these aggressive and growing sects. It says: "The four principal groups in this category, with their percentages of growth since the census of 1926, are: Seventh-Day Adventists (68), Assemblies of God (364), Church of God (192), and the Church of the Nazarene (183). These rates of growth are rather startling when placed beside the general average of 25.6 per cent for all Protestant and Catholic churches. (Roman Catholic increase was 23.3 per cent.) Of course, numerically considered, the rapid expansion of the

four groups is not very large. Together they have arrived at a total of only 783,276 members, or less than 2 per cent of the total membership of all Protestant churches. These sects, then, are making no great inroads upon the membership of the older and more conventional bodies. The 132 little sects which have less than 50,000 members each total only a little over 3 per cent of all Protestants. But," says *The Christian Century*, "if the staid and sober denominations which jog along with an average increase of 1 or 2 per cent a year have nothing to fear from the competition of those few zealous groups that are growing ten times as fast, it does not follow that they have nothing to learn from them. Those churches grow which are made up of members who believe that the message of their church is tremendously important to the world, who are desperately in earnest about communicating it, and who act accordingly. Such zeal is contagious, and such conviction is communicable" (*italics our own*). Illustrating the zeal of these sects, the editorial says: "Take the Seventh-Day Adventists as an example, because their reports are most complete. They have 201,215 members in North America and almost twice as many more in other continents, the result of missionary work all over the world. In 1942 the 'tithes and offerings' from the North American members were over \$15,000,000, or \$77.14 per capita. Tithes alone in that one year were more than the estimated value of their 4,741 church buildings. The investment in sanitariums, schools, and publishing houses is several times that amount." Applying this lesson, the article continues: "What would 8,000,000 Methodists do if all of them were equally convinced of the importance of what the Methodist Church is trying to do? Or 10,000,000 Baptists? Or 5,000,000 Lutherans? Or the 44,000,000 American Protestants acting together or even by denominational groups?" The editorial admits that this may not be possible, but adds: "All we are saying is that, unless something like that can be done, the respectable and intelligent denominations will continue to be intelligent and respectable and may do much good in the world, in a small way, but they will grow only at a snail's pace, and their achievements will be pathetically meager in comparison with their latent powers. That is what we can learn from the cults."—There is a very sad reason why some of the "respectable and intelligent denominations" in our country are not "in earnest about their religion." The spread of Modernism in their midst has resulted in doctrinal indifference, and that means that they, as a group, cannot feel that the "message of their church is tremendously important to the world." In fact, it is a declared doctrine of Modernism that certainty of the truth is fatal to a Church. But what about Lutheranism which, on the whole, is free from Modernism? Lutheranism is convinced that its message of salvation by faith in Christ is "tremendously important to the world." But is Lutheranism really "desperately in earnest about communicating it and does it act accordingly"? We can hardly say that Lutheranism is "jogging along" or "growing at a snail's pace." Its rate of growth is what many are inclined to call "normal." Nevertheless, also for Lutheranism, as the article suggests, there is something which it "can learn from the cults." This something St. Paul suggests in Rom. 12:11 and other places.

J. T. M.

**Brief Items.**—In Peru, Protestant missionaries have been persecuted. A recent report states that 16 members of the Peruvian Senate have requested the government to stop these persecutions.

The Presbyterian Synod of South Carolina passed a resolution asking that courtesy titles of "Mr." and "Mrs." be used by whites in dealing with educated colored people. (Exchange.)

The successor of the recently deceased Cardinal Hinsley as Archbishop of Westminster is Rev. Bernard W. Griffin. In this position he is the head of the Roman Catholic Church in England. The papers report that he is listed as a Liberal.

A few facts belonging to the field of sociology may be noted: In 1943 there were but three lynchings, which signifies that great progress has been made in combatting this evil, for in 1892 there were 231 lynchings.—It is reported that the birth rate of the nation is rising.

When Pastor Sven O. Sigmond, member of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, died in Brooklyn, it was reported that during his pastorate of 33 years his church had grown from 300 to more than 3,000 members and that its Sunday school is the largest in Brooklyn.

The Methodists are conducting a so-called "bishops' crusade" for a new world order. Meetings are being held at various places in the country. The promoters hope sentiment of the proper kind will be aroused which will influence the political leaders that will have to draft the peace terms.

If we are not to miss challenging opportunities, we must accept responsibility now for true and careful Christian social planning. As a result of war industry development which permits the growth of a brand new community of 40,000 people on swamp land in less than a year's time (Vanport City, Oregon, is today the world's largest housing development), . . . appalling social evils have developed where masses of people live under great tension, often in crowded, unsanitary shelters. Families are uprooted and separated; children run wild while mothers work, and young people grow up under abnormal conditions."

(From a Statement by Dr. Krumbholz.)

A report on addresses delivered by Professor Harris Franklin Rall of Garrett Biblical Seminary (Methodist), Evanston, Ill., says that he called upon denominations "to forget their doctrinal, organizational, and spiritual differences and present a united front against the paganism which besets the world." What folly! First spike your guns, and then march out in a body to meet the enemy. Doctrinal indifference certainly is not the answer to the spiritual distress of the world.

Announcement is made that four "of the outstanding recent sermons" of the Rev. Kaj Munk, the Danish pastor who, as it is reported, was murdered by Nazi agents and who had become famous as a poet, have been published in English translation by the Lutheran Publishing House, Blair, Nebr. The announcement says that Munk is spoken of as Denmark's Niemoeller.

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## Book Review

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All books reviewed in this periodical may be procured from or through Concordia Publishing House, 3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis 18, Mo.

**The Day of Wrath. A Study of Prophecy's Light on Today.** By Harry E. Jessop, D.D. Fleming H. Revell Company, New York, London, and Edinburgh. 119 pages,  $5 \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ . Price, \$1.25.

It is the same old story—in days of excitement and distress, people, also Christian people, pass by the clear and definite statements of the Holy Scriptures as contained in Isaiah, in the Psalms, in the Gospels, in the Epistles of St. Paul, and in other books of the Old and the New Testament, and turn to the difficult descriptions in the so-called apocalyptic books, as Daniel and Revelation. They forget the important hermeneutical principle that the less clear statements given in symbolic language, stressing numbers, speaking about beasts, trumpets, and great woes, should be understood and interpreted in the light of the clear books and passages. This also holds true of the present volume. If only the well-known passage of Luther in his exposition of the 37th Psalm about the clarity and obscurity of Holy Scripture would be kept in mind! The author is the Dean of the Chicago Evangelistic Institute, a Fundamentalist, but, as so many Fundamentalists and teachers at Bible schools and Bible institutes, a literalist. "The day of wrath" is indeed an important Biblical concept which we find stated in many of the Prophets, in Obadiah, Joel, Amos, Isaiah, Zephaniah, and others, and taken up by the Master and His Evangelists and Apostles in the New Testament; but this important term is a complex concept, speaking of important events in the history of the world and of the Church as precursors, forerunners, harbingers of the final consummation and the day of wrath at the end of all things. The destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. and 70 A.D., the first and second World War, and other terrible events in history are "Days of Wrath" and are related to the "Day of Wrath and Revelation of the righteous judgment of God," Rom. 2:4, as concentric circles to the center.

The present volume contains two parts, first, "Why This Slaughter?" second, "Antichrist Is Coming." But if we would go into details, we would have to write a brochure. Compare for the sound Biblical position Dr. Th. Graebner's *War in the Light of Prophecy*. L. FUERBRINGER

**The Principles of Christian Ethics.** By Albert C. Knudson, Dean Emeritus Boston University School of Theology. Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, New York, Nashville. 314 pages,  $6 \times 9$ . \$2.75.

This treatise gives valuable information on the history of Christian ethics and on the divergent teachings regarding various phases of the Christian moral life. And its masterly treatment of the rationale of the principles of Christian ethics together with their application to concrete situations (individual ethics and social ethics, the family, marriage, divorce, the State, war, Church and State, economics, etc.) deserves careful study. In so far the book is useful. But what it offers on the

great question of how the Christian life is produced and promoted is altogether harmful. What it teaches in the section dealing with the presuppositions of the Christian ethic is destructive of the Christian moral life. No true Christian life can be built upon the basis which is here proposed. While many of the conclusions reached by Dr. Knudson in his discussion of the Christian duties are in agreement with the teaching of Scripture, he takes away the dynamics needed for the Christian performance of these duties. In the first place, in listing the presuppositions of Christian ethic he warns against the harmful influence of the monergistic teaching and calls for the application of the semi-Pelagian-Arminian-Synergistic doctrine. He sets down the correct principle: "Man is a sinner and hence, if he is to be saved, if he is to attain to moral purity and to holiness of life, must receive divine forgiveness and experience the transforming power of the divine grace." (P. 64.) But this does not mean *sola gratia*. We read on page 93: "Against the Pelagian theory of sin there has been an unfavorable reaction on the part of the Church as a whole. The theory does, however, emphasize an important truth, that of man's freedom and responsibility. And in the semi-Pelagian or Arminian theory of sin the effort was made to conserve this truth without sacrificing or curtailing the more fundamental religious truth of the divine grace. According to this theory, man's nature was corrupted by the Fall, and as a result his will was weakened, and he was left with a native bias toward evil. . . . According to the theory of monergism, man is not morally *well*, as the Pelagians affirmed, nor is he morally *sick*, as the semi-Pelagians taught; he is morally *dead*. He has no independent spiritual vitality. He can of himself do no 'good' thing. He is absolutely dependent upon divine grace for his salvation. He cannot in his own strength co-operate with God in the work of redemption. God does everything. Monergism, not synergism, is the true Christian theory. The strict Augustinian doctrine was revived by Protestant reformers and made basal in their theology. . . ." Our Author takes the semi-Pelagian-Arminian-synergistic side. He declares: "The various ideas of a primitive Fall, of hereditary or racial guilt, and of the total depravity may be dismissed as unwarranted speculation." (P. 101.) "This pessimistic tendency to exaggerate the sinfulness and helplessness of man" (p. 104), this "subethical doctrine of original sin." (P. 264.) "Lutherans, Calvinists, and other Augustinians, who have held to an extreme doctrine of original sin and denied to 'fallen' man real freedom" are advised to renounce their monergism "and accept the synergistic conception of freedom." (Pp. 150, 20.) Monergism is irrational, and, worse, it is fatal to true morality. Our book's author is most explicit on this point. He knows exactly what we teach. Monergism "makes man completely dependent upon the divine grace for his redemption. . . . We ourselves, according to this theory, have no real freedom. We are slaves of sin. We can do no good thing. Our every act and thought in so far as it emanates from ourselves is sinful. We cannot avoid such action, and yet we are responsible for it. From this bondage of sin we can escape only through the aid of the Divine Spirit. Real freedom is the ability to do the right, and this is God's

gift to us. We have nothing to do with it ourselves. We are able to do wrong but not to do the right. . . . By grace we may be made free." What about this teaching? "An endless amount of equivocation and theological legerdemain has been resorted to in the effort to justify this position, but none of the attempts has ever succeeded or ever will succeed in rescuing this theory from its inherent irrationality. . . . It is fatal to true morality." (P. 81.) The only teaching which satisfies the demands of reason and produces true morality is the Arminian-synergistic teaching, which holds that "conversion is a work in which the human and the divine co-operate." (P. 105.) We, on our part, declare that the conversion and the morality which is produced in whole or in part by the natural powers of fallen man is a sham. In as far as the theologian and pastor and teacher operates with semi-Pelagianism in any of its various modifications, he makes conversion and the Christian life impossible.—Note, by the way, that the controversy on monergism vs. synergism is not a dead issue, neither in theology nor in practical life. And we thank our author for drawing the issue so clearly. Note, too, that the old sophistry is still being employed. "At bottom the difference [between semi-Pelagianism and monergism] seems to me one of words more than of substance. For both sides lay primary stress on the divine grace." (Pp. 186, 94.) Why, even the Pelagians of old, who ascribed everything to man, used to speak of "the grace" of God. Similarly, in the statements that "if a sinner is to be saved, he must receive divine forgiveness" (p. 64) and that "only through the divine grace can sin be forgiven" (p. 102) the term "gracious forgiveness" is not used in the Biblical sense. Compare statements like these: "Repentance is a change of mind, a godly sorrow for sin, an inner moral transformation. As such it is a sufficient ground for the divine forgiveness." (P. 49.) "The only moral basis for forgiveness is repentance." (P. 247.)

In the second place, our book speaks of "the unique significance of the New Testament as the chief source and norm of the Christian ethic." (P. 37.) "We base the view that love is the fundamental principle of the moral ideal on the teaching of the New Testament." (P. 118.) We, too, teach that the New Testament (and all of Scripture) is the chief (the only) norm and, more than that, the only source of the Christian life. The only norm of good works is God's Law, as presented in Scripture, and the power to lead a holy life is supplied only by the Gospel, preached by the Apostles and Prophets. But Dr. Knudson does not consider Scripture to be the inspired, the inviolable, the faithful Word of God. To him Scripture is a human product. For instance: "In the New Testament this doctrine appeared in the teaching of Paul with two or three important modifications. Jesus did not apparently commit himself either to the Fall theory or to the rabbinic conception of the *yezer hara* (the 'evil imagination' of Gen. 8:21). Indeed, he seems not to have raised the question as to the ultimate origin of human sin. Sin was to him an obvious fact; it was somehow rooted in the human 'heart'; but just how he did not say. Theorizing on the subject he left to others. And this we find in its most influential form in the Epistles of Paul, who had probably been predisposed to such speculation by his

rabbinical training. He may have learned the *yezer* theory from Gamaliel; but, if so, he freely modified it after becoming a Christian. He gave a more definite psychological content to the moral consequences of the Fall by identifying them with the *yezer hara*, which he thus transformed into a hereditary evil impulse." (P. 91.) According to this the Holy Scriptures are nothing but the pious thoughts of good, learned men. According to that the theorizing of Paul may be criticized, improved, or rejected by other learned Christians. Our author does that. He admits that "monergism has some basis in the teaching of Paul" (p. 94), and he feels at liberty to reject it as a false theory! The writings of fallible men, however, cannot serve as the source and norm of Christian ethics. The Word of God is the dynamic producing conversion, justifying men, and producing good works.

In the third place, the deity of Jesus Christ and His vicarious atonement are not touched upon in this treatise on Christian ethics. What the readers learn about Jesus is that "he did not apparently commit himself to the Fall theory, etc., that "he not only taught us what the moral idea is; he exemplified it in his own life; he bade us to follow him; . . . he is our perfect example" (pp. 157, 160), and "that he shared the apocalyptic hope of his day, and in not a few instances his moral judgments were no doubt colored by this fact. . . . He spoke and acted as a man of his own day, and this makes it impossible for us to accept either his teaching or his example as an infallible guide in dealing with the concrete problems of our time." (P. 158.) The presuppositions of Christian ethics set forth, for instance, in Titus 2:11-14 are ignored by Dr. Knudson.—His scholarship is not the Biblical scholarship.

Some gleanings. "Minucius Felix: 'We do not speak great things; we live them.'" (P. 42.) "We should say with Augustine that 'when we speak of the perfect virtue of the saints, part of this perfection consists in the recognition of our imperfection both in truth and in humility.'" (P. 149.) "Said Calvin: 'I have always been exceedingly pleased with the observation of Chrysostom that humility is the foundation of our philosophy.'" (P. 167.) "Heretofore the German *Beruf* and the Latin *vocatio* had been appropriated by the monastic orders as their peculiar possession. Only monasticism had a *Beruf*. This Luther reversed. It was just monasticism, he affirmed, that had no *Beruf*. The true calling of God was to be realized in the workaday world. This revolutionary doctrine was based on the doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers and on the doctrine of the sanctity of the common life." (P. 183.) "It is in the family that we learn the first and best lessons in obedience, reverence, truthfulness, fidelity, patience, self-control, unselfish devotion, purity, love, and all those virtues that go to make up Christian character. The family is the great training school of the moral life." (P. 199.)

Prof. Kantonen closes his review of our book with the statement: "The acceptance of Luther's doctrine of 'the orders of creation' is interesting. On the whole, however, while here and there the hands may be the hands of Luther, the voice is the voice of an Erasmus." (*The Lutheran*, Jan. 19, 1944.)

TH. ENGELDER

**How Did the World Begin?** By George McCready Price. Fleming H. Revell Co., New York. 94 pages,  $5\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{4}$ . Price, \$1.00.

For more than forty years George McCready Price, an Adventist by denominational affiliation, has written articles and books in defense of the Biblical doctrine of Creation against the Deistic (if not atheistic) theory of evolution; and while his writings are addressed to the common people in simple, popular language, his defense of the Biblical record of Creation nevertheless shows that he has carefully studied the theories and works of learned evolutionists. The reader may not subscribe to everything the author says. Not all the phenomena by which he seeks to support the Scripture record regarding Creation and the Flood may be explained as he does. Nor is it true that "God ordained the Sabbath as an everlasting divine memorial of this completed work" (p. 12). On the whole, however, the arguments which Price arrays on behalf of the Biblical Creation report against evolution are so overwhelmingly convincing and there is so much valuable scientific material stored up in this unpretentious Apologetic that we recommend it to our pastors, teachers, and laymen for private study, class discussion in society groups, and, above all, for collateral reading by mature students of our grade schools and high schools. Reason, in the light of the existing natural facts, cannot judge otherwise than that the Book of Genesis is true when speaking of Creation and the Flood. That is the conclusion at which the unbiased reader will arrive when he studies Price's well-written replies to the vital question "How Did the World Begin?"

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

**God's Answer.** By Dr. O. A. Geiseman. Published by Ernst Kaufmann, Inc., Chicago. 251 pages.  $5\frac{3}{4} \times 8$ . \$2.00.

With a few exceptions, the sermons in this volume are based on the old Gospel pericopes. The reader of these sermons will find that the old Gospel lessons can be used again and again and yet be presented in a manner that arouse new interest in the old truths. That is one thing that commends these sermons. They have other good features: Dr. Geiseman presents his elaboration of the text in a simple manner and in an orderly fashion; keeps in mind the needs of his congregation; is not afraid to flay sin; gives the comfort of the Gospel to sin-sick souls. We encourage the author to put into print also the sermons for the second half of the church year.

As I am writing, the thought comes to my mind that years ago we would find in the homes of our church members, besides the Bible, the Catechism, the hymnal, and a prayer book, also a *Predigtbuch*. Since our congregations have for many years been supplying the hymnal at the church services, we are not so sure that the hymnal is still found in every home. And we very much doubt that in many of our homes a sermon book can be found. It would be well that pastors urge their people to purchase such a book, so that when members of the family, because of illness or old age or other infirmities, are kept from attending the Sunday services, they may read a sermon at home. We say this

in spite of the fact that today our preachers are to a large extent supplying this need by means of the radio. The reading and contemplation of a sermon at one's own leisure under the circumstances mentioned has its own advantage.

J. H. C. FRITZ

**Proceedings of the Sixty-Fifth Convention of the Central District.**  
Published by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis. 102 pages,  
 $5\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ . 37 cents.

These *Proceedings* offer a doctrinal essay prepared by the Rev. H. J. A. Bouman on Holy Baptism, covering pages 16 to 57, a subject of extreme importance to every Christian. The Report of the District Mission Board, pages 58 to 71, is given in the form of an imaginary interview of the Director of Missions, the Rev. W. C. Birkner, by a layman on a railroad trip. The District Board of Directors was empowered to purchase a suitable building in the city of Fort Wayne, the purchase price not to exceed \$25,000, to serve as a central office building, where the various standing committees of the District may conveniently meet and be in close touch with the Director of Missions, the Superintendent of Schools, and the Treasurer of the District.

THEO. LAETSCH

#### BOOKS RECEIVED

*From Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich.:*

**Seed Thoughts.** By W. G. Heslop. 121 pages,  $5\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{3}{4}$ . \$1.00.

**Scripture Quiz Book.** By Mabel H. Hansen. 48 pages,  $5\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ .  
35 cents.

**The Chemistry of the Blood and Other Stirring Messages.** By M. R. De Haan. 183 pages,  $5\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{3}{4}$ . \$1.50.

*From the Water of Life Publishing Co., Milwaukee, Wis.:*

**Memories of the Master and the Way.** By Ervin M. Burke. 130 pages,  $5\frac{1}{2} \times 8$ . 75 cents.

*From Fleming H. Revell Company, New York, N.Y.:*

**God and These Times.** By Howard J. Chidley, D. D. 128 pages,  $5 \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ . \$1.50.

*From Loizeaux Brothers, 19 West 21st St., New York, N.Y.:*

**Paula the Waldensian.** By Eva Lecomte. 175 pages,  $5 \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ . \$1.00.

#### To Our Subscribers

It has been our custom to retain the names of our subscribers on our lists for two numbers after the subscription has expired, so that the subscriptions could be continued without interruption in case a renewal came in late. We were very happy to follow this plan at extra expense, but we are now unable to continue this policy because of present conditions.

Our Government has insisted that we reduce consumption of paper and eliminate all possible waste. Because of the restriction in the use of paper it will become necessary to discontinue subscriptions to all of our periodicals with the last number paid for under the subscription agreement. We shall, however, continue our policy of reminding our subscribers of the expiration of the subscription by inserting the usual number of notices in the second last and the last numbers of the periodicals they receive. It is our sincere hope that our subscribers will co-operate with us and the Government by renewing their subscriptions promptly upon receipt of the first notice.

June, 1943

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